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A SHORT
HISTORY
OF THE
PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS,

BY
Jews, Heathens, & Christians.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
AN ACCOUNT OF
THE PRESENT STATE OF RELIGION, IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
AND SOME
OBSERVATIONS
ON
CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS OF RELIGION.

BY A. ROBINSON.

"Omnia sæcula viderunt et laudarunt eos, qui, patriæ terrestris causa, mortem intrepido animo tulerunt. Quod cum ita sit, quis non laudet eos, qui patriam terrestrem cœlesti, et vitam hanc mortalem æternæ illi, quam sacræ litteræ nobis revelarunt, postposuere? Quis non vituperet viles animas, quæ vitam, quam cum brutis communem habemus, malunt retinere, brevi tempore amittendam; quam ~~sam~~, quæ amitti nequit, prima data occasione, adipisci."

LE CLERG.

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ERRATA.

Corrected.

- Page 51, Line 23, *for impurity, read impunity..*
— 52, — 5, *for member, read number..*
— 52, — 19, *for persons, read person..*
— 52, — 20, *for censorium, read sensorium..*
— 55, — 5, *for the martyrs, read martyrs..*
— 59, — 12, *for venal, read venial..*
— 75, — 7, *for one, read our..*
— 78, — 13, *for its horrid, read these horrid..*
— 121, — 5, *for possession, read in possession..*
— 133, — 22, *for state's, read state..*
— 135, — 17, *for dignitaries, read dignity..*
— 139, — 6, *for great is, read great as is..*
— 141, — 2, *for mind, be treated, read mind, and
makes it be treated..*
Page 143, Line 21, *for defect, read defeat..*



PREFACE.

ECCLESIASTICAL History is well adapted to serve two important purposes. It furnishes materials for the study of the human mind ; being the history of opinions, it is more than any other history calculated to exhibit, to the observer, the mental operations of man. It also enables us to estimate the value of opinions, in their influence on human conduct, to discriminate the good from the bad, to embrace the former and avoid the latter. It is the business of the philosopher, to avail himself of the aid of ecclesiastical history, for the first of these purposes ; but an application to the latter object, is the duty of every man.

The history of the church, has, till late years, been studiously kept from the vulgar, whether to prevent their detection of established error, or to keep from their view the vices of theologians, or for some less criminal purpose, I am not prepared to determine. I leave the profound metaphy-

fician, to explore ecclesiastical history, in order to estimate the strength and weakness of the human understanding, to trace the principle of the association of ideas, to shew the different province of reason and imagination, to point out the corruption of revealed truth, by the intermixture of ancient philosophy, and to vindicate the divine origin of the scriptures, by proving their ethics superior to those of the schools of the most celebrated sages.

It is my humble aim to instruct the common ranks of society, into a practical use of the history of the church. Dogmatism is said to be the error of vulgar minds, I have therefore endeavoured to exhibit it in odious colours, in order to lessen its influence. Infallibility has indeed been assumed by the bishop of Rome; but, although, he be the only Christian, who has avowedly laid claim to this prerogative, scarce a sect, scarce the humblest member of any sect, has been free from the tacit assumption of this extraordinary power. All persecution, supposes those who inflict punishment, the proper judges of crime, and heresy is a
kind

kind of crime, which can be judged of by none but an infallible spirit. In selecting a prevailing and acknowledged error, in the conduct of Christians, my object is the correction of existing prejudice. There are some prejudices, which appear to me, to oppose the prevalence of religion, benevolence, and all virtue, amongst the most mischievous of which the following must be numbered. First, That mental error is to be corrected by corporeal punishment. Secondly, That men are to receive religion on the authority of those, who may happen to be the stated teachers of it. And thirdly, That religion is rather a matter of prescription, and as such to be received, than a matter of fact, soliciting an investigation of its evidence.—If mental error be to be corrected by corporeal punishment, then the question occurs, who is to correct it? The man, doubtless, who is himself free from error; and who is this, but he who is infallible? Every man conceives himself to be in the truth, and his opposer in error, A, then ought to punish B, and B, in his turn, to punish A, which would introduce,

roduce confusion and bloodshed, and end in the extirpation of the whole human race. But the civil magistrate is, at once, the judge and the punisher of heresy. But the civil magistrate of England is different in opinion from the civil magistrate of France, the civil magistrate of France differs from the civil magistrate of Spain, and all of them differ from the civil magistrate of other countries. Shall one of them then, punish for heresy, what the other protects for truth, and shall truth be thus rendered local and indefinite? Doctor Beattie then must study afresh its immutability.—If there be such a thing as truth, and if God have willed man to maintain it by the infliction of punishment on error, he *must* have made the judge in the case infallible. The carnage, confusion, and ruin, which the general infliction of punishment on heretics, by the civil magistrate of every different country, or, which is the same thing, by every one who has obtained the power to punish, by being of the stronger party, would occasion, lead us directly to conclude, that all mental
error

error is above human law, or that the judge of it is constituted fit for his office, by having from God the spirit of infallibility. In defence of this position then, the Catholic may be heard with some patience, but the Protestant who defends the human punishment of mental error, is beyond the power of conception, contemptible.

2. If we be to receive religion on the authority of those who happen to be the stated teachers of it; it will follow, that the religion of every country ought to be received as alike true and important. That Jesus Christ committed a great error, in introducing a new religion, to the destruction of that of the Jews and Heathens, whose clergy he opposed and exposed to shame. That the reformation was a wicked work, as it was done in direct opposition to the popish priesthood. The consequences of this prejudice are—the prevention of reformation—the total ignorance of the people—and that train of evils which arises from a want of faith in the gospel; for nothing will operate in forming the character, but that which is received as true, after reflection on its evidence.

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3. If religion be a mere matter of prescription, then its truth is given up; and it is exposed to equal contempt with witchcraft and necromancy. The enlightened state of society, will but accelerate its fall, if this be the only foundation of its credit amongst men.

I hope the short narrative here offered to the public, will tend to correct these prejudices, and call the minds of readers to the serious examination of a religion, which men have ever been accustomed to hear enforced and recommended, on supposition of its *truth*.—It has long appeared to me, that the free examination of every subject, of philosophy, religion, politics, morals, has a favourable effect on society, and tends to confirm the minds of men in all important truth. In a country where the liberty of thinking is but beginning, it may, perhaps, have a temporary bad effect, but this will be very short, and the benefit will be both lasting and general. In England, at present, the fault is not, that men think too freely, but it is that they *do not think at all*. General dissipation
has

has destroyed the will and the power of thinking. To suppose the most free enquiry into every subject, can be attended with any lasting evil, is to suppose the truth of one or both of the two following positions, viz. first, That there are not as many principles which are true, as being believed, will answer the ends of society; or, secondly, That man is more likely to adopt error than truth, when he accustoms himself to examine evidence, than when he acquiesces in the information of others, and cultivates no knowledge of his own. In opposition to the first position, I observe, —the more we have yet discovered of nature and nature's laws, the more we see of the fitness for every valuable purpose, of the grand organization. The study of mechanics has taught us better the arts of life. The sciences of astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, electricity, have taught us how to communicate with different countries with advantage, and to preserve ourselves. Nature seems then to be no mean instructor, and we have no reason to doubt the perfection of its order. All

this shews the benefit of study, nothing appears dangerous or hurtful but ignorance. In religion, morals and politics, the study of nature, will, doubtless, teach us nature's best provision, and make us every way better qualified to benefit others, and to enjoy ourselves.—The second position needs no examination, because its absurdity is notorious. The multitude are better able to estimate evidence, than the learned are in general willing to allow; but were this not the case, their faculties can never get weaker by exercise, unless we are willing to deny all experience and all analogy; and if they be wholly ignorant, it is as probable that they may be led by a bad man as a good one.

Having faith in Christianity, it is natural for me to wish it to be fully and impartially examined; especially as I believe that if that examination were not universally to issue in conviction of its truth; that some degree of serious scepticism in a sober mind, is much likelier to be attended with virtue, than a perfect indifference and carelessness. A careless, thoughtless

less indifference, takes the *falsehood* of Christianity for granted, whereas a sober scepticism often *calls the mind to the subject*, and admits that religion *may be true*. Men are naturally more inclined to provide for an event which they have often reflected upon, and think *may possibly* take place, than for an event which has not occupied their attention, nor is in all their thoughts. Such a serious scepticism as this, is better than the *faith* of above two thirds of the people of England.

I have not omitted to notice, in their proper place, some arguments in favour of the truth of Christianity.

In the narrative part of this work, many great persecutions are omitted, but it is hoped sufficient is related to answer my design; and the size of the book is of consequence to that order of men for which it was intended.

What I have advanced in reply to Mr. Paley, on religious establishments, is done with the utmost deference to his great character, which has not a warmer admirer than myself.—I will indulge a

hope, that what I have written will, in some degree, tend to promote the interests of religion and benevolence; but if any think otherwise of it, I trust he will not deny me the merit of having intended well, nor be forgetful of what I have advanced in favour of freedom of thought—a freedom which I am no more ready to exercise myself, than to commend in others.



A SHORT

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SHORT HISTORY

OF THE

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS, &c.

PART I.

IN every age and in every nation it has been thought necessary for the governing of mankind, to proscribe a freedom of enquiry into the foundation of established opinions. And as the oldest established governments, of which we have any account, invested those, who assumed to themselves the appellation of the priests of God, with great power and privileges, religious opinions were always held too sacred to be subjected to the examination of common understandings.—But the human mind is prone to enquire into the reason of things; this is the prerogative of its nature, and it should seem that its curiosity is in general increased by the difficulties which attend the indulgence of it. As Adam presumed to touch, with his unhallowed hand, the

the tree of knowledge; so the perverse reason of his children presumed to approach the mysteries of religion. To prevent the overthrow of opinions thought essential to the support of the rights and privileges of kings and of governors, the arm of power interposed, and the heretic who could not be silenced by argument, was murdered with the forms of law.—Every religion, whether true or false, has been thus supported, as soon as it was incorporated into the civil policy of any human government.

This was the case with the Jewish and Heathen religions, when Jesus the Christ began to preach his doctrine and assert his divine mission, and accordingly the religion of Jesus, and those who embraced it, were subjected to the most severe persecution. Four evangelists record the persecution of Jesus by the Jews, which for its virulency, is exceeded by nothing in the bloody archives of the church. Agreeably to the policy of every religious persecution, it was urged, that the founder of the Christian religion, intended to destroy the form of government under which he lived, and his condemnation was *extorted* from the Roman governor, *as the enemy of Cæsar*.—After the martyrdom of Christ, the apostles of the new religion suffered every evil that the malice of the Jews could inflict. Their *acts*, as related by Luke, shew the force of prejudice in their countrymen, and the
energy

energy of zeal by which themselves were enabled to brave danger and death in their most terrible forms. He who reads the twenty first and following chapters of the Acts, will need no additional information concerning the vengeance of the Jews, to those who attempted to introduce a religion different from the law of Moses.

The Jews being at this time subjects of the Roman empire, and tolerated by the Romans, (who allowed every nation they conquered to keep their *national religion*, and the gods of their country,) And the founder of the Christian faith being a Jew, the religion of Jesus was not at first distinguished in the Roman empire from the religion of Moses. The emperors before the reign of Nero did not persecute the Christians at all, however not in such a way as to appear publicly the enemies of their faith.—Nero was a prince of a temper most savage and brutal, the work of persecution was therefore congenial to his soul. In his reign, the favourers of the new religion became very numerous, and the priests began to augur the desertion of their temples, if a speedy silence were not imposed on the preachers of the cross. Demetrius, who derived great profits from making shrines for Diana of Ephesus, had, before this, excited a tumult and banished Paul; and now the whole army of craftsmen united, and called upon the
civil

civil magistrate to exert himself against those, who were about to destroy the religion of their fathers. They contended, as has always been the case in similar circumstances, that the very existence of the civil government depended upon a continuance of the ancient superstition.— They accused the Christians of Atheism, because they denied the divinity of the Heathen gods, and insisted that the Romans owed their dignity to the gods they worshipped, and if that worship was forsaken the goodly fabric of their empire would be instantly demolished. The popular mind was filled with abhorrence of the Christians, and those who knew nothing of their opinions or practices were ready to believe them a number of profane and blasphemous Atheists.

Anno Domini, 60.—The savage Nero, as even Heathen historians inform us, having himself set fire to the city of Rome, took advantage of the unpopularity of the Christians, and charged them with the deed.* With the pretence of revenging this injury upon the Christians, the emperor visited them with a most terrible persecution. He threw some of them to wild beasts, and some he crucified. And such was the

* Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos, et exquisitissimis pœnis affecit quos per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabat.

the ingenuity of his cruelty, that he wrapped great numbers of them in garments dipped in pitch, put them upon posts and converted them into lamps to give light to the city. The garden of this monster was lighted by those helpless sufferers, and himself drove his chariot round it to take a double pleasure—a pleasure derived from his exercise as a charioteer, and a more refined, and doubtless, more exquisite pleasure inspired by the groans, convulsions, and cries of agonizing Christians! The shrieks of women burning to ashes, supplied music for the ears of the imperial Fiddler, whilst the Heathen priesthood, occupying the back ground of this admirable picture, enjoyed more secretly, but not less sincerely, the delicious banquet!

For the holy zeal, in the blessed work of persecution, which Nero displayed, he was loaded with honours, and his fame had spread as far as Spain; for in that province was an inscription found to his immortal praise, "*For clearing the province of robbers, and of those who taught mankind a new superstition.*" † Thus were the first Christians treated and calumniated: their master had been crucified with thieves, and his followers were confounded with robbers. This is a circumstance no ways flattering to the projectors of religious reformation. If the innocent characters of the first followers of Jesus, of

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† See Lardner's heathen Testimonies.

those men to whom it is now fashionable to give praise, could not shield them from the imputation of the worst of crimes; let not the reformers, however virtuous, of succeeding ages, expect better treatment from an interested, prejudiced and ignorant world.

Vespasian, who succeeded Nero, has left no monuments of his vengeance against the Christians. Even Christian historians agree, that he carried on no persecution in his reign.—He was disturbed by the reports, that a prince was to arise from the family of David; but it is not recorded that he put any to death through fear of a competitor.

Domitian, an emperor of a character similar to Nero, violently persecuted the Christians. Made uneasy by the reports concerning an expected King of the Jews, this emperor examined some of the brothers of Jesus, who assured him, that the kingdom of Christ was not of this world, and that no fears could be entertained concerning it by those who filled earthly thrones. As the ambition of Domitian extended not to a heavenly kingdom, and as he saw he had nothing at present to fear from the pretensions of Christ, he suffered the persecution to cease. In this reign, John was banished to Patmos, in the Ægean Sea, where he is supposed to have had the vision recorded in the book of Revelation.—It was his memorable practice, when

when being old he could no longer preach, to utter his celebrated exhortation, "*Little children love one another.*"

A. D. 100.—Opinions most unfavourable to the Christians every where prevailed, and no calamity, whether public or private, happened, which was not immediately ascribed to them.—The laws of nature were supposed to be overruled in favour of the ancient religion, and every source of human felicity affected, by the gods, who resented the desertion of their temples. The priests affirmed, and the people believed, that the flowing of the rivers, the fertility of the fields, and the prosperity of the empire, depended upon their attachment to the established worship. Nor were vulgar minds alone induced to act upon this strange opinion, even Trajan himself, was led to persecute the followers of Jesus, believing that to be the only safe way of preserving the empire. Philosophy had not yet enlightened the world by a discovery of the laws of nature—It was decreed, that hundreds of years should elapse ere Newton should be born. That ignorance which ascribed the flowing of the Tiber and the Nile to the ancient superstition, would have induced orthodox Christians to believe, that the Delaware would refuse its waters to Heretical Quakers.—No, the Supreme Ruler of the universe, regardless of the petty animosities of ignorant men, bids his rain descend

and his waters flow, to cheer and animate every nation, and the advocates of every faith. "Why then did the Heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Christianity so generally prevailed in the time of the emperor Trajan, notwithstanding every opposition, that the temples were almost wholly forsaken. He fearing the wrath of the gods, on this account, applied to the senate and procured an order "to restore the religion of his ancestors."

Pliny the younger, who, on account of his genius and learning, was the favourite of the amiable Trajan, after he had received an order from the emperor to exterminate the Christians in his province, wrote to beg the emperor's advice in a case of peculiar difficulty. He states, that so great was the number of Christians, that his province must be much depopulated if the orders be rigorously obeyed; for they were prodigal of life in the cause they had espoused. Pliny acquits the advocates of the Christian religion, of the crimes with which they had been charged, and says, he could find no fault in them, except their fond attachment to the *new and execrable superstition*. * The persecution of them, therefore, was merely for their religious principles, for their morals were good, even in the opinion of their judges. †—

Trajan

* Pliny's Letters.

† It seems to have been almost the whole business of Christian assemblies, after the expression of their

Trajan being informed of the great numbers, who were likely to suffer, gave orders that in future no rewards should be offered for discovering those guilty of being Christians; but should any be discovered, if they refused to recant, they were commanded to be punished. The governors of provinces took advantage of this order, and gratified their malice against them, by putting them to death whenever a discovery could be made.—Strange infatuation, which could convert the mild and merciful Trajan to a butcher of his subjects, about their differing from him, not concerning his kingdom, but the kingdom of heaven, where it was not likely his authority would be ever acknowledged! But he believed, he, by this conduct, pleased the gods, and secured the prosperity of the country; and who will be hardy enough to refuse to Trajan the character of a great believer, and a defender of the faith!

Pliny

their pious feelings, to resolve and bind themselves against the commission of any immorality. This is evident even from the testimony of those who had apostatized from the profession of Christianity, who are never too favourable to those they forsake.—“*Affirmabant autem, hanc fuisse summam, vel culpæ suæ, vel erroris, quod essent soliti statim die ante lucem convenire: carmenque christo, quasi deo, dicere secum invicem: seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent.*”—How honourable to our religion!

Pliny says, persons of all ranks had embraced Christianity, and accordingly we find that many very eminent persons suffered in this persecution. The celebrated Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, is numbered amongst those, who sealed their testimony to the truth with their blood.

Dr. Lardner vindicates the authority of an edict of the emperor Antoninus Pius, which breathes the spirit of the then little understood doctrine of toleration, and contains much sound reasoning on the subject of persecution. Antoninus opposed the persecution of Christians, and told those, who sought thus to torment them;—that they were increased by oppression;—that by dying rather than abandon their religion, they proclaimed themselves conquerors;—that if his subjects wished to obtain the favour of the gods, they must do it by themselves attending to, and performing their rites and worship, and not by murdering the Christians. This is language worthy a great and good emperor—language which reflects more honour on Antoninus, as it was then unknown; it is at once the expression of genius and humanity.

A. D. 150.—Antoninus Pius was succeeded by Marcus Aurelius, who had a zeal for the prosperity of the empire, and was not destitute of regard for his subjects.—Unfortunately for the Christians, he believed the prosperity of his govern-

government depended on supporting the Heathen worship, and was, in order to do this effectually, a most active and unrelenting persecutor.

When evil is practised through the impulse of passion, there is hope that a change of conduct may follow a correction of temper; but when men are guided in oppression by *principle*, they are the constant foes of human nature, and even that which, in other things, is the security of virtue, becomes the unshaken bulwark of mischief.—Aurelius was a persecutor through *principle*; and as his motive was good, his vengeance was severe and constant—it burned with a steady flame. His country had been recently visited by famine, floods, and war, and the philosophers urged him to offer the helpless Christians an acceptable sacrifice to appease their capricious divinities, which they supposed had visited their land with calamity, on account of the new superstition.

Marcus Aurelius continued to persecute the Christians, to the end of his reign—a period of near twenty years!—It is supposed they suffered more in this persecution, than even in that of Nero; the number of martyrs cannot be computed, and many of them were very distinguished persons.

A. D. 200.—Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, suffered death in this persecution, his venerable age (near ninety years) could not be spared to go to
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the grave in peace. Justin Martyr, Germanicus, and other illustrious persons met the same fate. At Lyons and Vienne, in Gaul, terrible slaughter was made. They were first excluded from the baths and the market—then tortured, and if they did not deny Christ, they were put to death in the most cruel manner. Some were burned, some were thrown to wild beasts, and even the tender sex were put to death in its most hideous forms.*

In the reign of Severus happened the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, and their companions. Perpetua had an infant at the breast, and Felicitas was just delivered at the time of their being put to death. Perpetua had an aged father who continued an Heathen, and who with all the eloquence of grief, besought his daughter to spare his old age, and to compassionate her infant. She thinking herself bound by higher considerations to adhere to her religion, her father was obliged to desist from his importunity.

These two young beautiful and amiable women, mothers of infant children, after suffering much in prison, were exposed before an insulting multitude, with many virtuous companions, to a wild cow. She mangled their bodies in a manner so horrid, that even the brutal mob were somewhat softened, and called out for a
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* Priestley's history of the Christian church.

more mild and speedy mode of execution. They were then carried to a conspicuous place, and put to death by the sword.

The days of chivalry were not yet come, those days which purified Europe from such brutality. What a spectacle was here! a crowd of Romans, polished by letters and boasting of philosophy, exulting in the agonies of young and elegant women, in the tenderest and most melting circumstances of life—mothers of crying infants! Let the rational enquirer attempt to account for the spread of humane sentiments in later times, and perhaps he may find we have reason to thank Christianity for a change so remarkable. Certain it is that the Romans, in the most polished periods of their empire, were delighted with scenes of cruelty, exhibited upon occasion of public rejoicing, which would shock the most vulgar of modern times, to observe but for a moment.

Some soldiers, an order of men, not much addicted to religion, seeing the uncommon fortitude of the martyrs, whose execution they had attended, came voluntarily and offered themselves to the executioners, declaring they also were Christians. The Prefect, and his friends, were alarmed at this zeal of the soldiers, and refused to do any more execution; but suffered them to return home in triumph.

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This solicitude for the crown of martyrdom, however we may admire the courage of the sufferers, must be confessed to be more than was required by that religion, which teaches its votaries, "When men persecute you in one city, flee to another."

In this persecution, four women and two men were burned in a brick-kiln,* and an innumerable multitude perished by various kinds of deaths. The celebrated Origen suffered many tortures in this reign, which, however, he survived and died soon after, at the age of seventy.

A. D. 256.—About the year 256, Valerian began a severe persecution of the Christians, which he was instigated to by their enemies, and especially the Heathen priests. Both men and women suffered death, some by scourging, some by the sword, and some by fire.

Amongst many great men who perished in this persecution, we must not omit to mention Cyprian, the celebrated bishop of Carthage.—He behaved with such unexampled firmness, as inspired his fellow Christians with an enthusiasm of admiration, who, in the ardour of their sympathy, exclaimed, "*Let us die with him.*"

A. D. 302.—Previous to the persecution under Diocletian, the Christians enjoyed fifty or sixty

* Priestley's church history.

sixty years of peace; but their sufferings were very great during his reign. Maximian, the son-in-law of Diocletian, was a great agent and promoter of this persecution, the infamy of it, therefore should be jointly shared by the father and the son. The first edict, which was published about Easter, in the year 303, at Nicomedia, where Diocletian and Maximian then were, ordered,—“ That all Christian churches, “ should be demolished to their foundations,— “ that their sacred books should be burned,— “ that those Christians who enjoyed any honours “ should be deprived of them,—and that private “ persons should be made slaves, if they did “ not renounce Christianity.” *

This edict was immediately pulled down, and the person who did it, executed. Another edict was published, by which the Christian clergy were ordered to be committed to prison, and commanded to sacrifice to the Heathen deities. A third edict followed, ordering those who refused to sacrifice, to be exposed to torture.—Truly dreadful were the engines of torture and of death, which were employed upon this occasion, in order to exterminate Christians and Christianity. Peter, a young man of the bed chamber of the emperor, and much in favour before this time, was first stripped naked, and then whipped till his bones were laid bare.

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* Priestley's history of the Christian church.

He was afterwards washed with vinegar and salt, and then slowly roasted upon a gridiron. Steadfast in his attachment to the faith of Christ, he endured all with a dignified patience, and died a martyr to the doctrine of a future life. It happened that the palace took fire, which offered a fair occasion to throw an odium on the Christians, and they were blamed for it, so that the persecution was carried on with increasing severity, under the pretext of revenging this evil upon them. Agreeably to the Imperial mandate, Christians were now murdered in crowds, with their children and whole families, some were cut off by the sword, and some were burned; many were thrown bound into the sea, and some were even taken out of their graves, and thrown into the ocean.

At Tyre, many were thrown to wild beasts. In Egypt, some were beheaded, and others famished to death. Some were crucified with their heads downwards, and suffered to remain in that state, till they perished with hunger.—Numbers had their flesh torn from their bones till they died.—Women half naked, were fixed by one foot to very high machines,—others fixed to two elastic branches of trees, were torn limb from limb, by their rebounding to their natural position. Thirty, sixty, and one hundred, men, women, and children were sometimes put to death in one day! At Pontus, the sufferings

sufferings of the martyrs were still more horrible.—Some had reeds thrust under the nails of all their fingers, some had hot lead poured upon them, and others were tortured in their private parts, and their bowels!* This is but a specimen of this terrible persecution.—The numbers that suffered, and the variety of their tortures, exceeded the calculation of the most observing of that time.

An occasional stop was put to this persecution, by a disorder which attacked G. Maximian at this time.—He was afflicted with a terrible ulcer, which bred worms, and the stench of which was intolerable, even to himself. Finding no relief from his physicians, or his Heathen gods, he wished to be commended to the God of the Christians, that he might cure his disease. He therefore published a rescript in favour of the Christians, which Dr. Lardner has given us at length in his Heathen testimonies, as follows:—

"The Emperor CÆSAR GALERIUS VALERIUS

"MAXIMIAN, Invincible, August, High Priest,

"To the People.

"Among other things which we have order-

"ed, with a view to the benefit and prosperity

"of the public, we did indeed formerly strive

"to correct all things according to the ancient

"laws and established constitution of the Ro-

"mans ;

" Priestley's history of the Christian church.

mans; and among other things, that the Christians who had forsaken the religion of their ancestors, should return to a right mind; forasmuch as by some means such an obstinacy hath seized them, and such was their folly, that they followed not the institutions of the ancients, which possibly some of their own ancestors had appointed, but according to their own fancy, and just as they pleased, they made laws for themselves, to be observed and followed by them, and in many places, they drew over multitudes of people to follow their customs. Wherefore, when after we had published our edict, that they should return to the institutions of the ancients, many have been exposed to danger, and many have been greatly afflicted, and have undergone various kinds of deaths; and for as much as great multitudes persist in their opinions, and we perceive that they give not due worship and reverence to the immortal gods, nor yet worship the God of the Christians; we, duly considering our accustomed mildness and humanity, with which we are wont to dispense pardon to men, have thought proper, readily to hold forth to them our indulgence, that they may at length be Christians, and that they may rebuild the houses in which they have been used to assemble, provided they do nothing contrary

“contrary to good government.—By another
“letter, we shall make known our pleasure to
“the judges, for the direction of their conduct.
“Wherefore, agreeably to this our indulgence,
“they ought to pray to their god for our welfare,
“and for that of the public, and for their own;
“that on all sides, the public may be preserved
“in safety, and they may live securely in their
“own habitations.”

The peace which this edict produced, did not long continue; for this emperor died soon after, and the persecution was revived in the east, by Maximin, who governed that part of the empire, and had been made Cæsar.

A. D. 300.—Dr. Lardner, in his collection of Heathen testimonies, has given the rescript of this emperor against the Christians, to promote this persecution. In this long rescript, the blessings of adhering to the ancient religion, are eloquently set forth, in the fields rich with corn, the temperature of the air, the smoothness of the sea, the peace of the nation, and the regularity of all the elements, which preserve or destroy mankind: and the reverse of all this, is described, as the consequence which must follow the progress and profession of Christianity. The people are invited with flattery, to exterminate the Christian religion, and are bid to ask what reward they please, for so pious a labour! This rescript was fixed up in every province,

province, and the effects it produced, were dreadful to the Christians. After carrying on the persecution some time, he was obliged to change his language, (for all his zeal had not rendered him successful) and speak in a milder tone to the Christians. For Constantine and Licinius, who had defeated Maxentius, had published an edict in favour of the Christians, and promised complete toleration in religion.— This attached the Christians to their cause, and Maximin finding himself not sufficiently powerful without their aid, likewise published a rescript in their favour, to strengthen his cause, and enable him to make head against the victorious army of Constantine.— But they saw through so thin a disguise, and as they detested the persecutor, they despised the insidious friend. Maximin was afterwards worsted in the war with Licinius, and finding himself deceived by the Heathen priests, who had predicted his success, he put them to death as traitors. He then published another rescript in favour of the Christians, but soon after died, and was immediately declared a public enemy, and those who had favoured his measures, and persecuted the Christians, were put to death. This happened about the year 313.

About three years after this, Licinius revived the persecution of Christians, who then disputed the empire with Constantine, who favoured them

them and their religion. Short as was this persecution, in it, many suffered degradation, and many martyrdom. When Constantine, after conquering Licinius, became master of all the Roman empire, the Christians ceased to be persecuted by Heathen emperors, and had the pleasure to hear Constantine himself, declare himself a convert to their religion. Julian, indeed, revived the persecution, but his reign was short, and the triumphs of his zeal, very inconsiderable.

1. The view we have here taken, of the first propagation of the Christian doctrine, cannot but strike the minds of those who are *habituated* to reflection, as affording a very strong argument, in proof of the truth of our religion.— We admit that false religions may boast of their martyrs; for every religion has been honoured by the sincere attachment of numbers. To suffer death for religion, is only a proof that those who suffer, *sincerely believe it to be true*, and the question concerning their *competency to judge* of its truth, remains unanswered by the pains they endure for its sake. When a man becomes a martyr for an opinion, formed by rational deduction, from premises taken for granted, we are still at liberty to *reason for ourselves*, and to receive or reject his conclusion, as it is agreeable, or repugnant to our own understanding. When martyrdom is submitted to, in attach-

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ment to some tenet of remote antiquity, it may still remain a doubt with an observer, whether the glorious sufferer, may not have been imposed upon by traditional evidence. It is not any *single circumstance* attending the Christian martyrs, which proves the truth of the religion they defended; but it is the *combination of all the circumstances collectively considered*, which we think a sufficient ground of faith, in the divine origin and energy of Christianity.

The evidences of Christianity, were not of that ambiguous nature, which requires acute powers of mind to examine; nor were they founded on traditional story, to those whose sufferings we have been considering. On the truth, or falsehood of the miracles, rests the argument for the Christian faith. The question then is,—can we, from these early martyrdoms, infer the truth of these miracles? It must be remembered, that the Christian religion was so wholly dissimilar to that of the Heathen, that the establishment of the former was the extirpation of the latter,—that the priests and the emperors were inspired with the warmest zeal against Christianity, the former, because they lived by the Heathen superstition, and the latter, because they believed the welfare of the empire depended on the support of the ancient worship.

The zeal of the Romans against Christianity, has been sufficiently shewn; through the long
period

period of three hundred years, almost without intermission, they persecuted its votaries to death. Yet in this period, notwithstanding all opposition, so numerous were the Christians, that their aid was courted both by Licinius and Constantine, who contended with each other for universal empire. Nay, in proof of the Christians being the majority, it is known, that during the uncertainty of war, Constantine, whose ruling passion was ambition, publicly declared himself a convert to the Christian faith.

The above facts demonstrate that the truth of the miracles was *sincerely believed by great numbers of every rank and talents* in these ages. It remains then to account for this *general and unconquerable faith* in the miracles; for the *reality* of this *faith* in them, is established in this history, beyond the *possibility of doubt*.

The first disciples of Christ, were not of that order of men likely to project a new religion; for those who are given to speculation and innovation, are generally men of some education and observation. In a word, they saw, or *believed they saw, the miracles*. Their story carries not with it the face of imposture,—they might be deceived; but they had no *intention to deceive*.*

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* I have long considered all writings in opposition to Christianity, which argued the invalidity of its evidence, from
a suppo-

This is evident from their history.—Now, although the belief of miracles was common in that age, yet the miracles amongst the Heathens were performed by the priesthood, and the character and circumstances of Jesus, who opposed both the Heathen and Jewish priests, were very unfavourable to his gaining credit as a worker of wonders.—The rulers were thought to be the only proper judges of these things, and *which of the rulers believed on them?* The miracles of Jesus were many of them very notorious, and done before the face of many; and it is extremely improbable that *many should be deceived by those senses, on the evidence of which we always rely.*

The miracles performed by the apostles were exceedingly various and public, and done before the Gentiles, to whom the character of a prophet was no common thing. As the various miracles

a supposition that the apostles and first disciples were *designing persons*, who projected an innovation to obtain consequence to themselves, as absolutely impertinent. The writings of the apostles, their steadiness, simplicity, nay every part of their conduct, shew them sincere believers in the doctrine they delivered. Without art, without worldly consequence, preaching a doctrine, persecuted, despised, and giving promise of no present good, the disciples of Jesus were animated by a zeal, flowing from a strong conviction of immortal glory, being confirmed to them by their Lord and Master.—So fully am I convinced of this, that I cannot easily believe any man to be serious, who affects to call the first preachers of Christianity persons of crafty and designing minds.

miracles of Christ and his apostles were plain exhibitions to the *sight and feelings of men*, and as they were very generally believed in, even unto death, nothing but absolute *insanity* could induce multitudes to believe they saw, what they did not see, if their evidence be not to be admitted. Supposing the apostles deceived enthusiasts, is it not altogether incredible, that after madly thinking they had *seen miracles*, they should be able to make others believe, that they *daily performed miracles themselves*? The writings of the apostles prove they were not insane, and the early Christians in general were never subjected to that imputation. The most extraordinary occurrence is credited *when seen*, however great its antecedent improbability—and the improbability of miracles, is no greater than the improbability of a revelation, for the latter could not *possibly* be established, without the former. The most natural conclusion is, that the miracles were really performed, and then of course, the revelation is established. It must have been a very convincing evidence which could produce so many martyrs, *especially as Christianity does not necessarily connect martyrdom and salvation*; but expressly declares benevolence, superior to martyrdom, and plainly says, that the *martyr without charity, is not profited*.*

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* It is worthy of remark, that there were about the time of Christ, many who pretended to *work miracles*, and to be
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2. This history proves that persecution cannot extirpate truth—for Christianity spread and took deep root even in the bosom of tribulation.—A lesson for religious murderers!

3. Tyrants are mostly persecutors, at least, persecution is a deed so shocking, that in none, but arbitrary governments, can it long prevail. The times which this history describes, were after Rome had lost its liberties. An alarm to the observers of persecution! A finger pointing to civil liberty in distress or ruins. *Seest thou*

the Messiah, whose cause soon came to nothing, and whose very names were forgotten by the succeeding generation. Now admitting, that the general expectation of the Jews at that period, of an extraordinary deliverer, made them more easy of imposition than men generally are; and admitting also, that men were then, both Jews and Heathens, more easily induced to attend to miracles than they are at this time: let the reader account for it if he can, that of all the pretenders to inspiration and a divine mission of *the times* we are speaking of, *Jesus alone* established himself in their lasting belief. The prejudices of the times were equally favourable to *them* as to *him*, and yet those prejudices admitted not their claim to divine authority; their outward circumstances were certainly *not less* favourable than his, to bribe the popular favour. Indeed, if some prejudices were in favour of the pretensions of Jesus, many were opposed to them; if he came at *a time* when men were prepared to receive him, his character and conduct were what they neither hoped nor wished for, in the Messiah. I wish the Deists would give due weight to this argument, the data on which it depends may be found in Josephus, who gives large accounts of false christs and false prophets.

thou a persecutor?—he is the Nero of later ages.

4. The cruel torments which the Christians suffered, even in the reigns of Trajan and Marcus Antoninus, the philosopher, who were men naturally of a mild and merciful temper, shew us, in a strong light, the *dangerous and bloody tendency of superstition*.—It is in the nature of man to pity the miserable; but superstition steels the heart against every amiable impression. It first teaches us that God hates certain persons; and then tells us that to hate and torment them is Godlike. It converts the great source of benevolence into a savage, and then exhibits blood and destruction as the ensigns of deity. Every other tyrant may be changed; but the man who supposes himself in this tyranny the agent of heaven, is absolutely inconvertible.—A lesson this to the subjects of superstitious princes!

5. The martyrs of Christianity shew us how very powerful is the influence of the principles of this religion.—Here are the inducements to virtue, the resistances to vice, and an antidote against the fear of danger and of death! *

* It has lately become fashionable to disregard all religion, and that even without taking the trouble of giving its evidence any examination. Such churchmen as Dr. Horsley and Dr. Knox have attempted to dissuade men from examining the
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the proofs of their faith ; and have represented it as dangerous, or, at least, unprofitable, for men to spend their time in such pursuits. The consequence is, men conclude, that religion is without evidence, and reject it altogether, as not even believed by those reverend divines, who defend it as an useful engine of state.—The author of “ Christianity, not founded on argument,” did not better serve the cause of deism, than those gentlemen, who are, perhaps, real believers in revelation. I wish to see religion discussed, because I fear men begin to think it is exploded completely ; for I believe its evidences are weighty, and that it *alone* is, and ever must be the *foundation of good morals*.

The historian, Mr. Gibbon, hath affected to speak of the early martyrs with contempt ; but surely this is acting an unbecoming part, and an attempt to put integrity to the blush, by deriding it in its fairest examples.—What provokes his sneer, excites my highest admiration ; and those men, who appear to him as objects of contempt, appear to me the most perfect examples of human virtue and courage. I am happy to find of the same opinion, a writer not inferior to Mr. Gibbon in knowledge, learning, virtue, or understanding, and, but unfortunately he was a Christian, one with whom Mr. Gibbon would have thought it an honour to be classed, I mean the venerable Dr. Lardner. Speaking of the early sufferers for the Christian cause, he says, “ To them and
“ other such men, I humbly conceive it is owing that there
“ is now any such thing as virtue in the world. To them
“ and others like them it is owing, that many great men, so
“ apprehensive of inquisitiveness in things of religion, have
“ been at length awakened, and induced to examine and consider, and also to embrace, the Christian doctrine, and then
“ to adorn it by the practice of all the virtues becoming their
“ reasonable nature and their high stations.”

HEATHEN TESTIMONIES.

A SHORT

A

SHORT HISTORY

OF THE

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS, &c.

PART II.

A. D. 300.—**W**HILST Christians were persecuted by the Heathens, and had no civil power on their side, to enforce their peculiar tenets, pains and penalties were not inflicted by one Christian upon another, for any supposed defect in his system of faith.—The enemy from *without*, contributed greatly to peace and good fellowship *within* the church. But when the Christians no longer suffered for their religion, from the hands of the Heathens; when their faith was embraced by the emperor himself, and supported by the civil power, they began to anathematize and curse one another, on account of minute differences of opinion; and by getting the emperor to take a side with them, the majority began to inflict heavy punishments on the minority.

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A principle had early discovered itself amongst the Christian clergy, and by them propagated amongst the common people, of the most pernicious tendency, which rent the church in pieces, and deluged it with blood.— This principle, made an agreement in points of theological controversy, the test of sound Christianity, and departed from the eternal rule laid down by the founder of this religion, “that those are his disciples indeed, who *do* whatsoever he commandeth them.”

That virtue and purity of character which Christianity requires, never yet disturbed the peace of society; never once was alleged as the reason of fanatical proceedings in religion; as the incentive to, or the promoter of, persecution of any kind.

This virtue is the bond of perfectness, it is the cement of society, it is the support of good government, and the only true test of Christian communion. But it is a principle and character too intelligible for the mysticism of ancient times, and too pure and trying to be exhibited and enforced by a corrupt clergy, and adopted by a corrupt people. Very few, in any times, will be found sincerely attached to the moral charms of true Christianity.—Men seeking rather amusement, than edification, turned their minds from those parts of Christianity which reproved their vices; to subtle and curious questions,

tions, which were but incidentally at most, introduced into the plain religion of Jesus Christ. These questions were concerning the nature of God, the nature of Christ, and the decrees and eternal determinations of the divine mind.

The religion of Moses exists and operates, independently of any considerations, relative to the nature or natural dignity of the man Moses. That God spake by Moses, satisfied the pious Jew, without being informed what was the nature or dignity, of the person who was appointed to them, the messenger of Jehovah.

If God speak, the authority is the same, and the obligation to attend is equal, whoever, or whatever, be the person he employs as the medium of his communications to men. It seems then a matter of small importance in the Christian system, to examine into the person, rank or natural dignity of Christ. It is enough that he was the messenger of God, sent to make known his will, and it should seem that we have more to do with the word of God, which he made known, than the *nature* of the person, by whom it was made known. Human duty is much insisted upon by Christ, but to reveal the nature of God, and his own nature; seems to be no material part of his mission; and if these sublime subjects be ever mentioned at all in the New Testament, as a discovery, they are never there said to be a discovery, of

the last importance to the acceptance and salvation of man. Not thus reasoned the divines of the fourth century. The practice of religion, was by them thought inferior to the soundness of man's faith; and the faith of the emperor and of the majority, was judged to be *the only sound faith*.

The rank which Jesus held in the scale of intelligent beings, had been a question even in the apostolic age, and continues a question to this moment. There were three opinions on this subject as early as the second century. First, The Nazarenes and Ebionites who held the simple humanity of Jesus.* Sabellius afterwards made the Deity act in the three different characters of Father, Son, and Spirit; but he varied the phraseology, without altering the sense of the Ebionites. Secondly, Those who held the opinions of Justin Martyr, which suppose the logos of the Father, superadded to the man Jesus. And thirdly, Those who embraced the ideas of the Gnostics, who held that Jesus had no material body, that he only suffered, died and rose again in appearance; but was a pure spirit, the brightest æon or emanation of the Father, greater than the greatest of the angelic powers.

After

* See Robinson on baptism, Gibbon's Roman history, Mosheim's ecclesiastical history, Lardner's testimonies, and Prieſtley's history of the Christian church.

After Constantine had declared himself a Christian, and become the defender of the Christians, his attention was soon excited to the questions then in agitation, concerning the person and natural dignity of Christ.—Arius, a learned and virtuous Presbyter of Alexandria, affirmed that Jesus was a creature produced out of nothing by the power of the father; but he admitted him to be the first and fairest production of God. High ran the disputes on this subtile question, which was supposed of infinite consequence, involving in it the terms of present communion and of future salvation. The church was rent by contending parties.—The imperial convert was surpris'd at, and shocked with, this division; and to put an end to it, called the famous council of Nice, in which the opinions of Arius were condemned, and Jesus the Son was declared to be *consubstantial with his Father-God*.

The Nicean Creed, found in the English Common Prayer-Book, fairly enough represents the opinions of the victorious party at this council; which, however, is found to fall far short of that hardy orthodoxy contained in the Creed called Athanasian, but composed, as is universally allowed, after the time of Athanasius, by an unknown hand.—Modern theologians have contended, and with a vast weight of evidence

dence have proved, † that before, and even at the council of Nice, that doctrine of the Trinity, which declares the full *equality of the Three Persons*, was neither admitted nor heard of.—He who reads the Nicæan Creed, already mentioned, will find it speak a language too ambiguous, to be the correct expression of triumphant orthodoxy. Subjoined to the Creed which was designed to oppose and condemn the opinion of Arius, that Jesus was created out of nothing, is an anathema, a true specimen of that bitterness of spirit which possessed those proud and quibbling divines.—It is as follows: “The Catholic and apostolic church of God, *anathematizes* those who say that there ever “was a time when the Son was not, or that he “did not exist before he was generated, or “that he was made out of nothing, or out of “any other substance, or that he is subject to “change.” Arius was sent into banishment with two of his followers. As if Constantine had been commissioned to punish, what he thought to be treason against Christ, in the same way as he might find it necessary, to punish treason against himself!—Alas! the throne of Heaven, cannot be shaken by the ideal treason of mortal creatures.

A. D. 325.—But Constantine was but an agent in this bloody business, the Christian priest-

† Priestley's and Horsley's Tracts in Controversy.

priesthood, like the Jewish and Heathen priests, were the great promoters of persecution, by the hand of the civil magistrate. Constantine was a friend of milder measures, and was not long before he shewed a friendship for Arius, and a want of zeal for the orthodox cause.

When the council of Nice broke up, Constantine wrote letters to different churches branding Arius with every abominable name, and threatening to put every one to death, who should find any of the books of Arius, and not immediately burn them. A measure, which if rigidly put in execution, would have been more severe and dreadful, than the edict of any Heathen emperor against the Christians. Uniformity of faith was his great object; but to accomplish this, he should have had the powers, not only of the emperor of Rome, but of the emperor of the universe!

Constantine, who just now regarded Arius, as the child and agent of the devil, presently recalled him from banishment, and recommended him to be again admitted into the communion of the church. The emperor left to himself, still regarded the question as a trifle; but instigated by bishops what have not civil rulers done in the blessed business of religious murder! Athanasius opposed the admission of Arius into the church, and was in his turn *banished*, being accused by the Arians of certain crimes. The bishops

bishops at last all yielded, (for the emperor bid them do so,) and Arius was received to communion. Now the Arians triumphed, and instigated the emperor to call a synod for the condemnation of Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, who was an Ebionite, holding doctrines similar to those afterwards called Socinian. He was deposed from his see and deprived of his honours. Thus went on in each party, the good work of persecution! The emperor, finding he could not with safety introduce Arius into Alexandria, sent for him to Constantinople. The bishop Alexander refused to admit him to communion, but the emperor commanded, and the good bishop yielded. The next Sunday was fixed upon for the admission of Arius into the church; but the day before, being easing himself, his bowels gushed out, and he died.

The orthodox party triumphed on the death of Arius, and ascribed it to the peculiar judgment and visitation of God, on account of his heresy. Mr. Gibbon says, "Those who receive the literal account of this story, may take their choice betwixt miracle and poison." § And the eloquent historian seems to throw suspicion upon the orthodox enemies of Arius.

The zeal of the emperor to extirpate heresy, and the spirit of persecution encouraged for this

§ History of the decline and fall of the Roman empire.

this end, may be best seen by a copy of a rescript, part of which I subjoin, from Eusebius, in Dr. Priestley's translation :—

" The Emperor CONSTANTINE, the Great, Augustus, to the Heretics. "

" Know by this law, O ye Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians, and Catharigians, who all of you make up your heresies, for your particular congregations; in what lies is your folly involved, and with what deadly poison do your doctrines abound, so that the healthy are made sick, and the living are brought to everlasting death, by your means. O ye enemies of truth, adversaries of life, and counsellors of destruction, every thing with you is hostile to truth, and congenial to the most abominable wickedness, being full of absurdity and fiction, by which you fabricate your lies. Wherefore we declare by this law, that none of you presume to hold any public assemblies for the future: we have therefore given orders to demolish all the places in which you hold your meetings. We forbid such assemblies of superstitious madness to be held, not only in a public place, but not even in a private house." This law is full of persecution and injustice; and this zeal for uniformity answered no end, but that of more

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strongly confirming the Heretics in Heresy. Virtue and not faith is the foundation of Christian communion,*—this maxim, acted upon, would have saved the lives of thousands piously murdered for the propagation of truth!

After

* “If ye were blind, ye would have had no sin; where no law is, there is no transgression.” The force of such declarations as these, depends on the truth,—that every sin must be a *voluntary violation of some law known and understood*. And if this be true, it must be equally so, that all merely mental, involuntary error, is innocent. Few will deny that merely mental error is innocent; for those who deny this, must affirm that all and every error, however involuntary, is criminal.—Every mental error must be equally criminal, except the criminality of error, depend on the weight of slighted evidence, and he who slights evidence, is guilty of crime in so doing, and cannot allege that his error is involuntary and merely mental. “He who is without law, shall be judged without law,” says the voice of inspiration. Why? Only because it is not in *his power* to conform to that, of which he has no information.—Error merely mental, is error proceeding from no perverseness of disposition, but arising from imbecility of understanding, or want of opportunity to obtain knowledge and examine evidence. This error must be innocent; but is it probable such error can exist, and have for its subject any doctrine of religion? I reply,—if merely mental error cannot arise on any of the doctrines of religion which are stated in the gospel, and there declared to be important; certainly such error may arise upon questions which *divines* have called doctrines of religion. A reasonable mind cannot doubt this, when it is remembered, that all questions concerning the nature of God, the nature of Christ, the decrees of God, the attributes of God, the nature of man, of heaven, hell, angels, devils, and much more than these, have been

After all this flaming zeal, poor Constantine, is supposed, by a most learned ecclesiastical historian, to have died an Heretic. The first Christian emperor departed this life an *Arian Anabaptist*. §

Constantine, notwithstanding his compliance with the wishes of the Christian priesthood, in issuing edicts of a persecuting nature, against the Christian sectaries, has been proved to tolerate the exercise of the Heathen worship, in his dominions.* We proudly set down this circumstance, so very honourable to the understanding, and the heart of the first Christian emperor.—It must not, however, be allowed that Constantine was a friend of *philosophical toleration*, whilst he persecuted some, who differently from

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himself,

been called important Christian doctrines. The man must be either above or below argument; who contends, that every question, on any of these subjects, will be clearly understood and resolved by every honest, virtuous enquirer. Various opinions have been entertained on them, ever since the existence of man, and ever will; and is every error criminal? Nothing appears to me more true, or more important to man's happiness, than that every involuntary error is innocent.—A note on this subject may be found in Abraham Booth's *Pædobaptism Examined*, in which the late learned Mr. Robinson of Cambridge is attacked with the utmost virulency, and which contains much false reasoning, vehement assertion, and indecent triumph.

§ See Robinson's History of Baptism.

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

himself, professed his own religion; it will be observed that his toleration of the Heathens, originated from motives of policy, they being above a third of his subjects; and his intolerance of the Christian sectaries, was the effect of a misguided and unenlightened zeal, operating on those whose numbers were too inconsiderable to give him any alarm.

It is remarkable that the history of religion affords us many examples of similar conduct, where the same political necessity did not exist. —Heretics have been persecuted, whilst those who have openly avowed their contempt of the Christian faith, have been honoured and praised.

In England, Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury held the highest offices of state, when every pious dissenter was incapable of any civil office, and was persecuted and despised by the reigning orthodox queen. It has indeed often been remarked, that those sectaries, who are in speculation the nearest to each other, but yet different from each other in some points, are the most determined in opposition, and pursue persecuting measures with the greatest virulence. The consequence which has been drawn from the above remark is this,—men who think the arguments of their adversaries insignificant and contemptible, seldom use the arm of power; those only do they attempt to subdue by persecution, whose arguments they cannot answer.

Without

Without the bounds of the Roman empire, the Christians were persecuted; but historians being few in these countries, we are at a loss for sufficient monuments of the rage of Heathenism. In the reign of Constantius, about the year 343, the persecution of Christians by Heathens, raged with great fury in Persia. Sixteen thousand martyrs are said there to have suffered.*

Valens, the Arian emperor, A. D. 366, persecuted the Athanasians, and those who held the Arian system less closely than himself. At Antioch Euzoius was at the head of the Arians, and much beloved by Valens, who persecuted to *banishment* all (except one) who refused to communicate with Euzoius. All the Athanasians of that place, were accordingly involved in the same hard fate.

A council was called at Lampfacum, in which the consubstantial doctrine was subscribed, and the Arian doctrine condemned; but the emperor *banished* the formers of these decrees, and all that were members of this council. The violence of Valens, almost exterminated the consubstantialists in the eastern empire, where their clergy and places of worship were rudely torn from them. This excited much well-founded discontent in the empire, and made the subjects of Valens apply to Valentinian, and enlist themselves in his service. Valens pre-
vailing

* Priestley's Church History.

vailing over the consubstantialists, continued the persecution and put many to death. Mr. Gibbon thinks the persecution of Valens much exaggerated;* however that be, as Valens was a prince remarkably weak, Euzoius and his other Arian bishops, doubtless instigated him to commit the outrages which disgrace his reign.

Such was the rage of contending sects against each other, that it was said to exceed the fury of wild beasts against men; and Gregory Nazianzen, a Christian bishop, laments that the kingdom of heaven was converted into the discord of hell itself. Mr. Gibbon relating these outrages, says, "The Arians, and Athanasians, "were alike actuated by that intolerant spirit, "which has been extracted from the pure and "simple maxims of the gospel." †

That Arians and Athanasians were alike actuated by an intolerant spirit, is most true; but that this intolerant spirit was extracted from the pure and simple maxims of the gospel, will never be admitted by those, who have studied the records of Christianity. This spirit, though early planted in the Christian church, is an exotic, which originated in the maxims of the Jewish and Heathen nations.—The corruptions of Christianity, which have subjected it to the suspicions of serious minds, and to the contempt

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. II.

† Hist. Roman Empire, vol. II. page 304.

tempt of men of bad principles and character, may be traced to the same fruitful source of error.

No one can doubt this fact, who observes the striking similarity in the customs of the church in her corrupt state, to those of the Jews and Heathens, and who considers that not one of those customs are prescribed in the Christian code.

The Jews and Heathens, whose religions were adapted to particular kingdoms, and intended chiefly to answer the ends of civil government, had both been accustomed to a civil establishment of their respective worship. So Constantine, an Heathen emperor, established Christianity as the religion of the state, thus changing the nature of its institutes, by debasing them to the purposes of political science, contrary to the express declaration of Christ, that his kingdom is not of this world. The Jews and Heathens had priests to offer up daily sacrifices, and the same order of men was introduced into the Christian church; though no sacrifice was ever offered there, after the one complete sacrifice of Jesus, until that of the mass was invented by the Papists, thence to argue the necessity of their gainful craft.

The Jews and Heathens had their respective high priests, and Christians created to themselves one—the pope,—though their high priest
had

had ascended to his father and their father—to his God and their God.—The Jewish religion enjoined the payment of tithes to their priesthood; the same privileges were soon claimed, and at length obtained, by the Christian clergy.† The sacred rites of the Heathens were performed in secret, and an air of mystery was thrown over every part of their religion; so the Christians, as early as the second and third centuries, received the Lord's supper in secret, and ascribed a sort of mystic charm to that ordinance, and that of baptism, by which the devil was supposed to be driven away, and the pardon of sin obtained.—The doctrines, thought most sublime, were only taught to the select few, after

† *The following is said to be the first Charter for Tithes in England:*

“ J. Ethelwolf, by the grace of God, King of the West
 “ Saxons, &c. *with the advice of the bishops, earls, and all*
 “ other persons of distinction in my dominions—have, for the
 “ health of my soul—the good of my people, and the prof-
 “ perity of my kingdom, taken the *prudent and serviceable*
 “ *resolution* of granting the tenth part of the lands throughout
 “ my whole kingdom—to the church and ministers of reli-
 “ gion, to be enjoyed by them, with all the privileges of a
 “ free tenure, and discharged from all services due to the
 “ crown, and all the incumbrances incident to lay fees. This
 “ grant hath been made by us to the church—in honour of
 “ Jesus Christ—the Blessed Virgin, and all saints—and out of
 “ regard to the paschal solemnity, and that Almighty God
 “ might vouchsafe his blessing on us and our posterity.—
 “ Dated at Wilton, Anno Domini, 854, at the feast of
 “ Easter.

after a long and laborious initiation; so the Christian church established a long state of discipline for the catechumens, before they were permitted to receive the mysteries, which ignorance and craft had mixed with Christianity.—The Heathens consecrated the groves in which the temples of their gods were erected; the Christians in imitation of them, consecrated the houses of their worship, and the ground in which they buried their dead.

The Jewish and Heathen priests were clothed, when they discharged the duty of their offices, in splendid and peculiar robes. In this, also, they were followed by the Christian clergy, equally zealous to be looked upon, by the vulgar with reverence and awe.

The Heathens deified their heroes, and the Christians worshipped their saints, those heroes of the faith. The thief and the murderer were safe, if they took shelter in the Heathen temples; and the same sacred sanctuary was afforded by Christian churches, in the dark ages.—He who seriously views the offspring, must easily recognize the parent.

Mr. Gibbon himself, witnesseth, that the Christian church embraced the *rites of the Heathens*, when treating on this subject, he says, "The religion of Constantine, atchieved in less than a century, the final conquest of the Roman empire; but the victors themselves, were
G "insensibly

“ insensibly subdued by the arts of their vanquished rivals.”†

A. D. 385.—The honour of being the first of the Christian emperors, who put his Christian subjects to death, on account of their religious opinions, was reserved for Maximus; for Theodosius did not carry his system of persecution so far into execution, though he deprived the Arians of their churches at Constantinople, and sent some into banishment. In the reign of Maximus, a sect arose, holding partly the Gnostic, and partly the Unitarian opinions, who offended the orthodox, and roused their proud spirit of revenge. The first founder of this sect, was one Marcus: but the most illustrious of his disciples, was named Priscillian, after whom the sect were called Priscillianists.

Priscillian, after a long and vexatious persecution, was murdered, along with many others, who held the principles of this sect. A milder fate awaited some others of them, who were banished the country, and had their goods confiscated; Priscillian, like all other heretics, was accused by his pious persecutors, of every crime that can disgrace human nature; but these accusations were totally false, and rebound on the enemies of this illustrious sufferer.—It may not always be a proof of a sound understanding, to suffer martyrdom for religious belief; but it is certainly

† *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. III. page 102.

certainly a high proof of *integrity of mind*.—Priscillian, agreeably to this observation, as all impartial historians witness, was not only a blameless, but a rigidly virtuous character.—His sect was famous for self-denying virtues, and if we were to set down his only fault, we must write, that it consisted in holding opinions different from the priests, and in possessing a heart which disdained duplicity.

The Donatists, so called from a famous person of the name of Donatus, make a great figure in the history of persecution, in the beginning of the fourth century. This sect boasted a great number of members, who were a kind of Arians, or Unitarians, but seem to have separated from the church, chiefly on account of what they thought an invalid ordination of Cæcilianus, a bishop, who had been ordained by one Felix. Felix was himself accused of being one of those, who, in time of persecution, had, through inglorious fear, delivered the sacred books to the enemy.

The Donatists thought the church contaminated by this ordination, and separated from it, to establish a more pure communion. So large was this sect that historians inform us, the bishops of it were betwixt three and four hundred in number.

The Theodosian code is full of edicts against these sectaries; and Honorius had the honour

of promulgating the most severe of these in the year 414.

For so flight a heresy, simply for dividing from what, by the authority of Theodosius, proudly called itself the Catholic church, the *pious saint Augustin* declared, they would be eternally damned in hell.—He did more, he urged vehemently their persecution upon earth. It never struck this *boly lecher*,† that he was thus adding *murder to reboredom*.

Hard, indeed, is the lot of heretics, to be damned in both worlds ; great is the Catholicism, and charity of the Catholic church, which so zealously promotes, and in part inflicts, this damnation !

The philosopher will be astonished, that it could once be supposed, that the universal parent could rejoice in the torment of his children, whose only fault was a sincere desire to obey his will, and a *scrupulous fear* of acting contrary to it ; but the politician will inform him, that the peace of a state requires the governors to overrule such dispositions in the subject, and the emolument of men in power, and no regard to religion, or to God, is at once the end and the reward of this murderous policy.

The Donatists, agreeable to the wishes of our *political saint*, were most cruelly persecuted. Three hundred of their clergy, and several thousands

† Robinson's History of Baptism.

thousands of private persons, were stripped of their wealth, churches, and honours, and banished their country. The whole sect was stripped of the rank of citizens, and their worship proscribed. Heavy fines were imposed upon such as persevered in their heresy, and, if those fines proved ineffectual, the imperial court were to cut them off. The heretics triumphed in their religion, many, perhaps thousands, were murdered by the forms of law, and the country was thrown into tumult and confusion.

The conquering Genferic rescued the oppressed Christians, and availed himself of their just alienation from a government, under which they suffered the loss of property, liberty, and life. Thus Mr. Gibbon well observes, "the intolerant spirit which disgraced the triumph of Christianity, contributed to the loss of the most important provinces of the West?" †—Is not this a grave lesson to persecutors, and is its policy yet to be defended?

But although Genferic, to serve his own views of domination, and to gratify his mind, which teemed with the Arian heresy, rescued the Donatists from persecution, he soon turned the edge of persecution against those who persecuted his sect. Many, who were called Catholics, were stripped of their honours and sent into

† Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. III.

into banishment by this victorious barbarian. Hunneric his son continued the persecution which his father had begun, but death soon arrested him in his mad career.—Thrasimund, his nephew, carried his persecution so far, and so long indulged his intolerant spirit, that on his death bed he extorted from his successor, a solemn oath, that he would never tolerate the sectaries of Athanasius.—But his successor judged it better to disregard his wicked oath, than drink the blood of his innocent subjects.

Theodosius is happy in the praises of the Protestant historian, doctor Mosheim,* for his *pious* endeavours to extirpate Heathenism; but it is unfortunate for the reputation of this learned divine, that he has so repeatedly censured the Heathen emperors for attempting thus to extirpate Christianity. Theodosius, perhaps, believed the truth of the Christian religion, and the falsehood of the Heathen superstition. The emperors believed the truth of the latter, and rejected the evidence of the former.—Theodosius was fired with zeal for the new faith, and they were alarmed with daring innovation.—Theodosius was forbidden by his religion to persecute any living being; but their religion, contained no such excellent doctrine. I hesitate not to say, I approve rather of those who acted consistently with the superstition they revered,

* Mosheim's ecclesiastical History, Vol. II.

revered, than of him, who embracing the true faith, scrupled not to trample its most sacred injunctions under foot, to fulfil the purposes of a perverted mind.

A. D. 416.—Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria is a conspicuous name in the holy list of persecutors. —The Novatians (a sect, who, like other dissenters of those times, differed from the church in nothing so much as the maintenance of a more pure morality,) were the first victims of the pious fury of the patriarch. He interdicted their worship, and confiscated the vessels they used in their churches. He shewed his love to Christianity, by his enmity against those who did not admit its evidence, and the Jews were at once the objects of his hatred, and heavy persecution. He banished those he did not murder, from their dwellings, and from Alexandria. So great was his zeal for religion, that he even overstepped the bounds of existing laws, to prosecute with greater rigour, his pious robberies, and murders. The state was weak, and the venerable priest violated law with impunity. Orestes, the acting magistrate, he set the mob upon, and thus attempted his life; but he was rescued by loyal citizens, and the principal assassin was put to death. Cyril pronounced the funeral oration of his illustrious agent, and to add celebrity to the martyred assassin, he styled him *the wonderful*.

Cyril,

Cyril, still fired with zeal for the church, and practised in the ways of assassins, found means to get some to murder, a young and beautiful female philosopher, called Hypatia. Peter, the reader of the church, and a ^{new} ~~member~~ of the godly disciples of Cyril, were the officiating butchers, who tore off her flesh with oyster shells, and threw her just dead, or then agonizing, into the flames. This elegant lady was of the religion of the Greeks.

Saint Cyril obtained the condemnation of Nestorius, whose heresy consisted, in his maintaining, that there were two persons, as well as two natures, in Christ. It was the misfortune of this heretic, that he could not conceive, that there could exist a nature without a person; and it appeared nonsense to his unenlightened understanding, to ascribe to Jesus two natures, and but a single person. Person~~s~~, he supposed, signified the *sensorium* of attributes, and a *nature* without a *substance*, was an idea too abstract for common comprehension. Yet he was not without friends, and it was by the aid of infinite finesse and influence, that Cyril procured his condemnation. The eastern bishops protested against these proceedings, and in their turn condemned the heresy of Cyril, and by their sentence, deposed him of all his honours. But their power was not equal to their spirit, and their sentence could not be carried into execution.

execution. They, however, made an effort, and placed soldiers at the door of the cathedral. A rigorous assault was made and much blood spilt. The mind of the emperor Theodosius was distracted at these proceedings, and he called God to witness his innocence, of the conduct of the ambitious and abandoned priests. Such was the conduct of councils and synods!—Cyril, after much difficulty, at last triumphed, and Nestorius was sent into banishment in the year 435.

A. D. 435.—A furious dispute broke out in the reign of the emperor Anastasius, at the close of the fifth century, concerning the question, “Whether one of the Trinity was crucified, or “whether only the man Jesus suffered?”—No such question as this indeed is ever stated in the scriptures; but if those who pleased themselves with agitating it, had confined themselves to the sober use of argument, the philosopher might have smiled at their folly, but could not have charged them with wickedness. Those who first bring forward subtle and perplexing questions for examination, should suffer every one to reason in his own way, and draw his own conclusion; for they who propose such matter for human enquiry—declare two things, first, That it is worthy such enquiry; and secondly, That the human understanding is adequate to a decision of its merits. Yet it is often affirmed, by those who contend for the truth of

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mysteries

mysteries, that those very mysteries are too sacred for the carnal mind of man to explore. The above question mocked the solution of reason, and *war* was made to settle the important point.—Vitalian, with an army of Huns and Bulgarians, defended the Catholic faith. He depopulated Thrace, besieged Constantinople, and slew sixty-five thousand of his fellow Christians, to obtain the recal of the bishops, and the establishment of the doctrine of the council of Chalcedon!!—"Such," says the elegant historian, "was the event of the first of the *religious wars*, which have been waged in the name, "and by the disciples, of the *God of Peace*." †

About the year 520, Justinian the emperor, discovered a spirit of severe persecution and intolerance. He allowed, for the conversion of all Heretics, the term of three months, and if their conversion was not then accomplished, they were deprived of the rights of men and citizens.

The Montanists soon felt the effects of the severe edicts of Justinian, and their vast wealth which he arbitrarily seized, should have been sufficient to reconcile his avarice to their heresy.

A remnant of Heathens still existed in the reign of this emperor, which he unjustly *compelled* to embrace the Christian worship. Martyrdom and Christianity were set before them, and

† Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. IV. p. 577.

and they chose the latter, rather than suffer the former; for the historian is obliged to declare that the Pagans, in the whole progress of the new religion in the Roman empire, shewed little disposition to be ~~the~~ martyrs to their creed. The philosopher must account for the remarkable difference in this particular, betwixt the advocates of the old religion and the new.— This difference certainly arose from the different degree of the force of their conviction of the truth of Christianity and Heathenism.

Justinian fell furiously upon the Jews and Samaritans, who were obliged in defence of themselves and families, to rise in rebellion, in which *twenty thousand* suffered death, and twenty thousand, were sold to perpetual slavery.— Those who remained, were obliged to conform to the *faith of the emperor*.

A hundred thousand Roman subjects, were extirpated by the Samaritan law, which says Mr. Gibbon, “converted the once fruitful province “into a desolate and smocking wilderness.” Such was deeply felt to be the policy of persecution! The philosopher stands aghast at the horrid spectacle! What renders this conduct of the emperor still more ridiculous and contemptible, is he himself, after his thus drinking the blood of Heretics, actually imbibed Heretical opinions, and died in the sentiments, or nearly the sentiments, of the Gnostics! A goodly

follower of Constantine, the imperial Arian Anabaptist. The Jews after this, suffered by the persecution of the emperor Heraclius, in the beginning of the seventh century.

That friend of Priestly domination, Doctor Mosheim* himself, confesses that the persecution carried on by Heraclius, was at the instigation of the Christian clergy, a race of men, who have marked their track with blood in every age. The emperor dragged those devoted sufferers to the church, and compelled them to be baptized. The rulers of France and Spain, in the same way effected the conversion, of the inhabitants of those countries. The reader will think it adds little to the evidence of our holy religion, that multitudes were obliged to embrace it, and had no choice left them, but to be baptized in water, or in their own blood. Childeric, who reigned over the French, was deposed by the authority of the pope, about the middle of the eighth century, and his kingdom given to the conquerors of Italy, Pepin and Charlemagne. This was not the first instance of the popes attempting the deposition of princes. Leo, who opposed the worship of images, shared the same fate with Childeric; but his courage and talents were greater, and more friends flocked to his standard. Leo, however, was a Heretic, and merited deposition at the hands

hands of the omnipotent vicar of God; but Childeric had not offended against holy church, and it may remain a matter of enquiry, what induced the venerable bishop to exert so unfriendly an authority. Far removed from narrow views of worldly interest, the reader will not be easy to convince, that the blessed pope, whose only ambition and wish, was to be advanced to glory and immortality in a future state, could be induced to shake the throne of the weak Childeric, by the thunder of his power, for any earthly emolument. History rudely charges considerations of temporal aggrandizement in this transaction, upon the Roman pontiff. It declares to the astonished Catholic, that Pepin and Charlemagne were men of enterprise, and engaged to reward the munificence of the pope, with a large tract of country. That Pepin had great influence at court, where he ruled and directed all affairs in the name of Childeric, and the removal of that prince was rendered easy, by the timidity of his disposition, and the weakness of his intellect.

Pepin well rewarded his benefactor, by the gift called the Exarchate. This memorable gift consisted of a surrender to the Pope, of almost all the provinces of Italy, and first constituted the bishop of Rome an independent sovereign,

reign. §—If the power of priests have occasionally been formidable to princes, it has always been formidable to the subjects of princes, and most of all, when the princes and priests have united their influence, and opposed the rights of men, by the arm of this world, and the terrors of the world to come.—The history of the reign of Charlemagne proves the truth of this remark.

The contest about the worship of images, was carried on for almost a century, with the utmost violence, and nearly cost the emperor Leo his kingdom and his life.—The wars, tumults, and persecutions occasioned by this nonsensical dispute, are sufficient to stain many pages of ecclesiastical history, and thousands bled through the madness of contending parties.

Such was the zeal of the worshippers of images, that their priests (who were never much attached to morality) affirmed, that rather than neglect or forsake this custom, it were better that *a man entered every brothel, and visited every prostitute in the city.* Perhaps it were better, men were absolute Atheists, than guided by such teachers, who on all occasions, have sacrificed the interests of virtue, to the support of the contemptible rites of their own invention, to give a sanction to their holy mummary and craft.

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§ Mosheim's Ecclef. Hist.—Gibbon's Rom. Empire.

Charlemagne ranks high as a warrior and conqueror, and the church has honoured him with the title of *saint*; but that is an ambiguous honour, or rather an indelible disgrace, in those dark and barbarous times. The murder of Heretics gave Charlemagne the claim of *sainthood*. He appointed the punishment of death, for the following crimes: 1. The refusing to be baptized.—2. The false pretence of having been baptized.—3. A relapse into idolatry.—4. The murder of a bishop or priest; for the murder of other men was but a *venial crime*.—5. Human sacrifices.—6. Eating meat in Lent.*—Such was the zeal for religion, displayed by a man, who was in his private conduct extremely vicious and dissolute!

The fifth offence here enumerated, is one with which the Heathens have often been charged, but of which the Christians have thought themselves free. Certainly the Christian scriptures are free from any such institution, and opposed to its spirit; but this cannot be said of the conduct of Christians. Every martyr who has suffered, has been put to death, under the pretence of pleasing God. God then is represented as delighting in human blood. Let it, therefore, be for ever remembered, that *all the martyrs which Christians have murdered, have been so many human sacrifices offered up to their God,*
and

* Gibbon's Roman Empire, vol. V. page 137, &c.

and remain for ever a monument of the Heathenish corruption of their worship.

Amongst the most bloody persecutions, which stain the annals of the dark ages of Christianity, must be reckoned that of the Paulicians, which happened in the ninth century.

The Paulicians, have been supposed to be a sect of the Manichæans, from some opinions which they held in common with those erroneous Christians. They were often severely persecuted. After suffering nameless evils, in the cause of what they deemed religious truth,—their persecution was so extremely violent, that they at length rose in defence of their dearest rights, in the reigns of Curopolates and Leo. Against these their oppressors, they carried on a war with various success, but were at last almost cut to pieces, and afterwards transported in large bodies to Thrace.

Their sufferings in the reign of the empress Theodora were so great, that nothing renders them credible, but the terrible slaughter every where produced by the furious and implacable spirit of superstition.

Theodora, the regent in her son's minority, published a decree, by which all the Paulicians were sentenced to death, who did not renounce their faith, and thus violate their consciences. The execution of this decree was attended with the most horrid consequences. They were compelled,

compelled, on pain of death, to kill their very celebrated and most beloved teacher Sylvanus with their own hands. From this proposed butchery, they turned indignant, and but one infamous fellow could be found, of the thousands of this sect, who did not rather chuse to die, than be guilty of such a deed. About a *hundred thousand* of these honest heretics had their goods confiscated, and perished by fire and sword. The ingenuity of their enemies was racked, to find out torments sufficiently cruel for these poor Christians;—for such is the genius of superstition, and such its influence on the human mind, that *mere opinions* have been punished with tortures, which have not been once thought of for crimes of the most pernicious kind. The distresses of these innocent people, made them seek the protection of the more merciful Saracens, and thus a war was kindled amongst the Greeks, which the revolution of a whole century was not sufficient to extinguish.—Another, amongst numberless proofs of the impolicy of persecution, and its tendency to destroy the peace, wealth, and prosperity of states.

Many sects arose in the twelfth century of inferior name, who suffered the common fate of all, who dared on theological subjects, to have an opinion of their own. Those bold and virtuous divines were burned to ashes, in the

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midst of the shouts of their exulting foes. The man, who presumed to charge the priests with their most notorious vices, was immediately assassinated at their instigation, or murdered publicly through their influence.

The twelfth century was honoured with one sect of too much importance to be slightly passed over, and of too much suffering virtue to be ever mentioned without praise. This was the Waldenses. Some think they derived their name from Peter Waldus, an eminent merchant of Lyons, whose zeal for piety and virtue, induced him to give his substance to the poor, and become, like Noah, "*a preacher of righteousness*," in a most dark and corrupt age.—Others assert, that Waldus or Valdus himself derived his name from the sect, whose doctrines and opinions he adopted, and who had long resided in the vallies of Piedmont, and who were called Valdenses, from the vallies they inhabited.* whatsoever was the origin of this sect, Peter Waldus was a most eminent person amongst those illustrious reformers, who in a profligate age, had the virtue and courage to maintain the purity of the Christian religion.

"The peculiar doctrines for which these Christians were remarkable, were the following:—they denied the supremacy of the pope, and

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, and Maclean's Note, vol. II. page 452.

" and the propriety of an established clergy.—
 " They affirmed, that the church, from its
 " purity, had degenerated, in the time of Con-
 " stantine, by being made an engine of state,
 " and a kingdom of this world. They main-
 " tained the right of every man, who percei-
 " ved the truth of Christianity, to preach its
 " doctrines. They denied the efficacy of in-
 " dulgences, for the remission of sins; they,
 " in the place of indulgences, placed, prayer,
 " fasting, alms, and reformation. They denied
 " the need of confession to priests, of prayers
 " for the dead and purgatory. They renounced
 " riches, and affirmed that the ministers of re-
 " ligion should get their living by labour like
 " Paul. They denied the lawfulness of war,
 " the propriety of suits at law, inflicting capital
 " punishments, resistance and oaths." In these
 things they differed from the church; but they
 differed still more in considering *morality* as the
end of all religion, and all doctrines and specula-
 tion but subservient to this. Strange doctrines
 these, in this age of priestcraft and corruption!
 Morality was scarcely thought any part of reli-
 gion, and the lives of the clergy convinced the
 common people, that *their* religion was quite
 in opposition to good morals. The Hierarchy
 was insulted by these presumptuous Christians,
 whose doctrines levelled it with the ground.
 The priests heard these doctrines with mad-
 ness,

ness, and saw, with indignation, those pious preaching weavers "deny all ungodliness and "worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, "and godly in the world." When the work of righteousness could be done without them, the priests trembled for the credit of their craft, and used every art to throw an odium upon this growing sect. A sect so humble, so diligent, so severely virtuous, were valuable in any state. They increased manufactures and agriculture, and thus enriched the state in which they lived. Their doctrine of passive obedience, rendered it impossible for them ever to become troublesome or dangerous to government; for they never resisted the civil claims of their rulers. They were the best example to the lower orders of the people, of sobriety and attention to business, and of the most scrupulous honesty. Philosophy will ask, what then could induce the rulers of the world, to lead these lambs to the slaughter, and to pursue them with fire and sword?—The answer is at hand, the world was governed by priests, who measured the worth of man, by his obedience *to them* and *their wisdom*, and who never have failed to mingle heaven and earth, in opposing those who did not adore them. The Waldenses rejected the authority of their order, and thus roused the vengeance of those *butchers of mankind*.

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That there were some enthusiasts amongst these venerable confessors, may be granted to the infirmity of human nature; but a body of men more truly descriptive of the primitive disciples of Jesus, more gentle and obedient to temporal jurisdiction, and more conspicuous for every generous virtue, is not registered in the annals of mankind.

I am awed with inexpressible terror, when I contemplate the obliquities of the human heart, which were never more discovered, than in the proceedings which were conducted against those glorious men. To punish *them* was the *Inquisition* invented;—a court which, for ages, has disgraced human nature, and still continues to disgrace the character of some of the nations of Europe.

In less than a century, from the public preaching of Waldus, the tenets, and what is of far more importance, the *virtue* of this sect, made a rapid progress upon the Continent.—Even men of power, and particularly Raymond VI. earl of Thoulouse, favoured their reformation. This made the priests still warmer in the business.

Pope Innocent III. sent extraordinary legates into France, to extirpate by bloody, or any other means, the spreading heresy. Rainier, a monk, and Pierre de Castelnan, an archdeacon, and afterwards a friar, were charged with the
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holy commission. Several others were sent on the same gracious errand. These were the first who were distinguished by the ghostly name of *Inquisitors*. These defenders of the faith, put to death whoever they could not bring to profess the Romish creed. So well did they execute this commission, that the pope sent others to almost every country where the heresy existed.

The council held at Thoulouse, A. D. 1229, by Romanus, cardinal of St. Angelo, and pope's legate, went farther, and erected in every city a *council of Inquisitors*, consisting of one priest, and three laymen. But in four years afterwards this council was broken up; for the laymen being the majority, it is probable they were not thought sufficiently sanguinary. This holy office was given to the Dominicans, or preaching friars, and wherever they went, they glorified the church, by the murder of heretics. Fires blazed in every corner of the world, and Nero would have been put to shame, by the more vigorous and bolder zeal of these venerable men! A crusade was engaged in, in France, against the heretics of all denominations, who were called by the general name of Albigenes, from the country where they resided, for at this time, the southern parts of France were called Albigenium. Pope Innocent III. promised to all the princes ample indulgences, for the murder of the heretics in
their

their respective provinces. In the name of the pope, this crusade was proclaimed, which was carried on with the greatest cruelty for many years, and involved the provinces of France, in all the horrors of a civil war.

Simon, Earl of Montfort, commanded the orthodox army, under the ghostly direction of Arnold, Abbot of the Cisterians. Simon was rewarded for his pious labours, with the confiscated estates of Raymond VI. Earl of Thoulouse, who had observed an ambiguous conduct in this suffering season, but was known in his conscience to adhere to the heretics. This confiscation was effected by the pope, not without trouble; for a civil war was some time carried on, between the house of Thoulouse and the king of France. It would require a volume to detail the cruelties, assassinations, murders, of these horrid times, and the terrible effect they had on the state of civil society. The blood of thousands flowed on the high altar of priestcraft, and the church trembling for its safety, forgot the correction of its vices, which multiply and thicken before the eye of the historian with so dreadful a shade, that he conceives himself rather contemplating the temples of Venus and of Bacchus, than the pure residence of Jesus and of God. §

Very

§ Fleury's Ecc. Hist. and Mosheim's Ecc. Hist.

Very numerous were the heretics in the fourteenth century: and so far were they from being exterminated by the persecutions which had followed them, that the testimony concerning the Israelites seems to be fulfilled in them, viz. "The more Pharaoh oppressed them, the more they multiplied." A sect of enthusiastic madmen sprang up in this century, called the Brethren and Sisters of a Free Spirit. These rather contributed to debauch than reform the age, and were too contemptible for notice: nevertheless they afforded the church an opportunity to exercise her talent of persecution, which she warmly and heartily embraced.—About this time the priests were extremely disturbed by the life and death of the famous John Wickliff, of England, who, after troubling them with damnable heresy, was, by some unlucky providence, suffered to *die in his bed*.—His followers, however, afforded more pleasure to the Inquisitors; for they had the happiness to burn and destroy great multitudes; nor did they let any escape whom they could discover.

Wickliff had the audacity to oppose the mendicants, or begging friars, (a set of miscreants, who, under the pretence of poverty, attempted to seize and appropriate all wealth to themselves) and call down their curses upon him. He was one of the first heralds of the reformation, and translated a book into the vulgar

gar tongue, which contained the heresy of all heresies, namely, the scriptures of the New Testament. This terrible book was long hidden from the common people, as containing every thing alarming to the dignity and importance of the church and clergy. Peter Waldus had, in his time, gotten this same book translated, which was dreaded more than gunpowder would have been, as tending to blow up the edifice, which pious ages had reared. It was wise in popes, cardinals, and priests, who had attached to themselves the glory and riches of the world, and who claimed privileges above the kings of the earth,—never to let it be discovered to the *people* that their master was a carpenter, low in the estimation of men, and without a place to lay his head, and who had explicitly renounced all worldly jurisdiction and honour, both to himself and followers, by unequivocally declaring, “*His kingdom is not of this world.*”

Wickliff opposed the power, but retained many of the absurd doctrines, of the church, and his greatest heresy, and most wicked deed, seems to have been his publication of the New Testament, and subjecting the mysteries of revelation to the examination of plebeian understandings. For this atrocious action, never to be forgiven, his heretical bones, after slumber-

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ing in the ground, were dug up and burned, for the honour of the church.†

The light which Wickliff struck out, illuminated great numbers in England, and after his death reached other countries, especially Germany. Indeed there is a point beyond which imposture cannot go; it requires some semblance of virtue, in an age at all enlightened, in the man who would deceive with effect. But the clergy were without even the appearance of religion, in their lives at this time—and had lost all sense of shame and decorum. Those who could not judge of the reasonableness of a religious system, could form some estimate of the obligation of honesty and temperance. The profligacy of all orders of priests, made men suspect that authority which they pretended to derive from the holy and benevolent Jesus.

Amongst the most eminent of the disciples of Wickliff, in foreign countries, who sustained a heavy persecution, John Hufs is to be named with peculiar honour. He lived in Prague, in Bohemia, in the beginning of the fifteenth century. The acuteness of his understanding, the sweetness of his temper, the extent of his learning, and the force of his eloquence, are acknowledged by his friends and his foes.*—His indignation was roused by the extreme wickedness

† Gilpin's Life of Wickliff. * Gilpin's Life of Hufs, &c.

ness of the clergy, and he had the courage to express his sentiments, with all the energy of a reformer. He was more scandalized at the vices of the priesthood, than at the absurdity and folly of the vulgar creed and worship; yet he departed, in some things, from the doctrine of the church. He, however, believed the doctrine of transubstantiation, which, in after times, in the progress of innovation, became the touchstone of orthodoxy, by conforming to, or dissent from which, a man was permitted to live, or thought worthy to die.—Hufs was himself an ecclesiastic, but, like most heretical priests, of a life and conversation which formed a perfect contrast with those, who were favoured by the church. The animated and honest conduct of this reformer, soon met its reward from those *men of God*, whom he had presumed to censure.

John Hufs was summoned to appear to answer to an accusation of heresy brought against him in the council of Constance, which he obeyed under the safe conduct granted him by the emperor, Sigismund.—Articles of impeachment were exhibited, and he was *commanded to plead guilty*; but he refused to obey the voice which would have induced him to condemn himself. Many an Englishman has heard, in the courts of Great Britain, a prisoner cautioned *not to plead guilty*, but to depend on

the evidence to be produced, such an one must recollect he is reading here of the proceedings of a court of priests, on the peculiar business of their craft. He will be satisfied.—Hufs, though under the protection of a safe conduct from the emperor himself, was, by a breach of public faith, arrested and put into prison.—Historians agree, that the clergy bribed those in power, to destroy their adversary, and by every wicked art, at last prevailed upon them, to pronounce the condemnation of Hufs. On the 6th of July, 1415, a large fire was lighted, and every thing set in readiness, for the murder of this celebrated man. John Hufs was then led forth from his prison, amidst the taunts, scoffs, indecent insult, and triumphing of his enemies, to the place of execution. The fire blazed around him—with a manly fortitude he endured the torment, and expired, a martyr to virtue, and an honour to our race. §

When Hufs was removed, the clergy and zealots rejoiced aloud; but they soon found that the burning of heretics, is not always the death wound of heresy. The cause of this amiable man survived him, and animated with double energy, the breast of the virtuous Jerome of Prague, a gentleman and a layman. This friend and companion of Hufs, hearing of his hard and unmerited fate, hastened to assert indignant,

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the innocence of his life and to plead the rectitude of his cause.—The same arbitrary power however, which proved too strong for Huss, laid hold on Jerome, who met the same fate and triumphed in death, which he had provoked by his virtue, from bloody men.

Jerome was a most accomplished gentleman, his virtue was above all suspicion and above all temptation from desire or from fear, his learning profound and extensive, and his eloquence the most graceful and commanding. But the penetrating Montesquieu remarks, that great circumspection should be used in prosecuting magic and heresy; (which he properly joins together,) *because the most unexceptionable conduct, the purest morals and the constant practice of every duty of life, are not a sufficient security against the suspicion of crimes like these.** He could not have contemplated any ancient or modern executions, which would more naturally inspire him with such a noble sentiment as this, than those of John Huss, and Jerome of Prague.

In this, as in all other instances, the blood of martyrs increased the number of profelytes.—The blood of these holy men called for vengeance, and avengers were soon found, whose zeal and ability were such as to give no small disturbance to the church, though they also were not free from an intolerant disposition.—

They

* Sp. Laws, book XII.

They formed themselves into a body, and put at their head Nicholas of Hussenet, and the illustrious John Ziska a knight of Bohemia.—The unlawful proceedings of the council of Constance might, and did, justly alarm these men for their civil and religious rights, and forms an apology, perhaps sufficiently just, for their resisting in an hostile manner their ancient rulers; but it would have been perhaps a more prudent part to have peaceably left the kingdom, and retired to a more just and friendly shore.

A serious war however broke out, which continued till almost the middle of the fifteenth century.—Various was the success on both sides, and the emperor Sigismund found how exceedingly formidable even a small army is, when animated by a zeal for religion. Such were the boldness and enterprise of their general Ziska, who had but one eye when he took the field, and soon lost the other also and was perfectly blind, that he took many towns and held them long, and obtained many signal victories over the arms of the emperor. After much bloodshed and great destruction in the kingdom of Bohemia, this terrible war was at length ended, with infinite loss and suffering on both sides. Another lesson to kings and princes on the policy of persecution, and the wisdom of being guided by priests.

The

The Waldenses, at this time, pressed on all hands by persecution, and driven to the borders of Italy, still continued to assert and to exemplify the purity and morality of the Christian religion.

If we here pause a moment in the progress of ~~our~~^{one} detail, we cannot help reflecting, 1. In the first place,—That the persecutions carried on, under Heathen emperors, were neither more *cruel* or of *longer duration* than those inflicted by Christians upon Christians, nor indeed were they either so long or even so cruel in general. A common apology hath been offered for the Christians, by ascribing their measures to dark and ignorant times in which they lived.—But if Christianity be of any value to those who embrace it, the believers in it, in these times, must have been more enlightened in moral science, than the obstinate unbelieving Heathens.—Again, the opposition that heathenism met, from the new dispensation, was far greater than one sect of Christians received from another.—The Christians by hard *experience*, had been led to reason against, and censure persecution in Heathens; but the Heathens had undergone no such discipline, when they tormented the Christians, and were therefore less disposed, and prepared to check, their own insolence, having never felt similar violences. From all these considerations it appears,

pears, that before the bar of reason and of reason's God, the persecuting Christians are much more worthy of the most severe punishment, than the Heathen emperors, who had acted a part so improper at the introduction of the Christian faith.

2. It cannot escape the observation of any attentive mind, that the persecutions carried on against heretics by the civil magistrate, were at the instigation of those who called themselves *the ministers and priests of Christ and his church*.^{*} It becomes the Christian clergy to be zealous to wipe away this stain on their character, and to shew they are indeed the servants of Christ and of God. One thing is obvious. The gospel is by Jesus always represented as an acceptable gift, proceeding absolutely from *love*. It can never be the duty of its ministers therefore to seek men to embrace it from any other motive,

* "Who was it that crucified the Saviour of the world for attempting to reform the religion of his country?—The Jewish priesthood.—Who was it that drowned the altars of their idols, with the blood of Christians, for attempting to abolish Paganism?—The Pagan priesthood.—Who was it that persecuted to flames and death those who, in the time of Wickliff and his followers, laboured to reform the errors of popery?—The popish priesthood.—Who was it, and who is it, that both in England and Ireland, since the reformation—but I check my hand, unwilling to reflect upon the dead, or to exasperate the living."—See the Bishop of Landaff's Considerations, &c.

tive, than a personal wish to do *them* good service. I leave the reader of the above-mentioned persecutions, to discover this *one single motive* in any instance where personal liberty was invaded, and person and property were injured, in order to enforce the profession of Christianity. He will say, if the spirit of the gospel ever influenced him, of all the tribes of pretended priests who have murdered Jesus, in his followers, "My soul, come thou not into their secrets, and into their society enter thou not."

3. Nations, governors, kings, take warning! read and observe the numerous evils which persecution and the influence of priests have done to you. How often have they rent kingdoms, and involved the rulers in poverty, shame, and ruin?—He who reads at all,—reads this in every page,—the strength and glory of a prince are his subjects,—and his infamy is to see them devour one another. Persecution is civil war.

4. It is to the honour of the Christian religion, that during the times of persecution and ecclesiastical tyranny, which we have been relating, the clergy kept the holy scriptures from the inspection of mankind, and thus exculpated our Saviour Christ from the charge of having instituted such curses amongst men, as the practices and commands of the priesthood were deeply felt to be. Nay had not the holy books, contained doctrines and maxims, opposite to the

wishes and interests of those, who in those times, governed the world, they would have been ostentatiously exhibited, as the divine charter of priestcraft and oppression. That the divine philosophy of the gospel, which was given to produce virtue in the heart and life of man, and which alone presented mankind with the hopes and fears of good and evil in a future world, should be converted into a system of human policy, erected in worldly splendour and pomp into an engine of oppression, and finally should be hidden from the eyes of the vulgar, to preserve from detection and contempt, ^{these} ~~the~~ horrid corruptions and usurpations, affords a melancholy instance of the perversion of the human understanding and the depravity of the human heart.

The priests, and such as carried on this terrible farce, could believe nothing of the divine original and authority of the religion, they in this mutilated state, imposed on the people; a future world and an account of actions to the supreme judge, were the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, but could not be believed by those, who had every thing to fear, and nothing to hope from such doctrines. The Heathen priests are said to have universally despised the vulgar superstition by which they lived, and it is too much to be feared, that the Christian clergy have been too justly liable to the same charge.

A

SHORT HISTORY

OF THE

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS, &c.

PART III.

WE are now come to the celebrated æra, when the reformation from popery was favoured by the kings of the earth, and consequently spread far, and was attended with the lasting separation of some of the most famous kingdoms of Europe from the see of Rome.

Had the religion of Jesus Christ, as it was originally intended, been considered as a system entirely independent of civil power, and left to prevail by its own evidence, and to influence the temper and conduct of man, as it did before its civil establishment by Constantine; had it ever, in these circumstances been corrupted, it might have been reformed by argument alone, without the aid of the civil magistrate. This is the case at present with the Christian church in America, and with the dissenting churches

in Britain. But when religion is once made a part of the civil establishment of nations, great convulsions and much bloodshed may be expected to attend its reformation. This was exemplified at the reformation, an event so memorable in Europe, of which I shall make but hasty mention, as it is no part of my business to give it in detail.

Luther is numbered amongst the first and most important authors and conductors of the reformation. About the year 1517, he became a conspicuous assertor of the morality and purity of the Christian religion, in opposition to the Bishop of Rome, who had employed John Tetzel, to sell indulgences to enrich the Roman see.

Martin Luther was born in Saxony, was a monk of the Augustin order, and professor of divinity in the academy of Wittemberg. He was learned, honest, eloquent, and intrepid, every way qualified to project and execute a mighty revolution. Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, supported and encouraged Luther. —The pope was soon alarmed at the progress of the doctrine of this daring reformer, and Luther was summoned to appear at Augs-burg, to answer those who were prepared to accuse him. From this partial tribunal, he appealed to the pope. Leo was a hot headed pope, and in this agitation of affairs, foolishly
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for his own interest, published a bull, "commanding his subjects to acknowledge his authority, to forgive the punishment due to transgression of *every kind*." It seems always to have been the fatal policy of priestcraft, *to augment its claims, in proportion as the evidence of them receded from the public mind*. It has not learned, that the day of assumption, should not approach the day of examination. The conduct of the pope, happily for mankind, (but unhappily for the holy see) roused the spirit of indignant resistance, and widened the breach it was meant to heal.—Leo, afterwards, sent Charles Miltitz into Saxony, to confer with Luther, who adopted a gentle mode of argument and address, and prevailed on the champion of the new faith to make many concessions, and even to write to the pope, acknowledging he had gone too far. The reformation at this moment trembled for its interests, and blushed to see the manly mind of its patron softened by the finesse of a courtier. But its triumph was approaching, notwithstanding the impending cloud: a quarrel soon took place, between Luther and a Romanist, which led the reformer again to assert his new doctrines, and still farther to proceed against the pretensions of Rome.—Amongst a number of inferior names who flocked to the standard of Luther, and thus strengthened the cause of the reformation, the Christian world rejoiced to recognize, the mild and learned Philip Melancthon.

In

In the year 1520, the pope excommunicated Luther, but the reformer evaded this blow, (being informed of the pope's intention) by publicly withdrawing himself from the communion, of the See of Rome, and things being now desperate, Luther set up a separate worship.*

Behold ye Protestants of Europe, established in all the pomp of power, and not ashamed to boast of your antiquity,—your origin and your birth! An obscure individual, proscribed for his heresy, and deemed an enemy to the state,—is your father and your bishop. The reader now sees this infant church in its humility and weakness; be not discouraged, gentle reader, thou shalt soon see her assuming mighty powers, dictating with a tone of arrogance, and persecuting to death those who questioned her authority!

Charles V. king of Spain and emperor of Germany, favoured the condemnation of Luther, who was present when sentence was passed upon him, at the diet of Worms. The elector of Saxony seized Luther on his return from this diet, and lodged him safe from the arm of his enemies, in his castle of Wartemberg.

Whilst Luther laboured to accomplish the reformation in Saxony, Ulric Zuingle, a man more bold than Melancthon, more enlightened than Luther, who united in himself the perfec-
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* Mosheim's Ecc. History, vol. III.

tions of both, without their weaknesses, threw off the papal yoke in Switzerland.—He was a canon of Zurich, and supported by many powerful followers.

The execution of the sentence of excommunication against Luther, was warmly urged by three popes in succession, Leo, Adrian, and Clement the seventh; but it was opposed by some German princes, and in the mean time, the reformed doctrine spread rapidly. Several diets were assembled, to which the friends of our reformer hastened, and insisted upon the necessity of a general council. At the second diet at Spire, "All alteration in the doctrine" and discipline of the church was pronounced "unlawful until the assembly of a general council."

John the elector of Saxony, (John had succeeded Frederick, and imbibed his love of reformation,) and the landgrave of Hesse, were much offended with this decree, and, along with other powerful men, signed a *protest* against this proceeding. This memorable circumstance, first obtained the friends of the reformation, the name of *Protestants*.

A confession of the Lutheran faith was given in, at the diet of Augsberg, where the emperor attended in person, and a formal condemnation was pronounced of it.

Gustavus

Gustavus the reigning prince of Sweden, favoured the reformation; and Olaus Petri preached it in that country. The king of Denmark fed the flame, and in 1539 a full reformation was effected in that kingdom.

The queen of Navarre favoured the reformation, and it was preached, but much opposed in France. Spain, Hungary, Poland, and the Netherlands, heard the reformation preached, and various was the success, with which it was attended in those kingdoms.

John Calvin was a zealous advocate of the reformed religion in Switzerland,† and his labours, with those of the eminent Zuingli, effected

† The famous John Calvin was guilty of an action, which gives more scandal to Mr. Gibbon, than all the hecatombs of heretics, which have been ever offered to God by Christians. Servetus had embraced Calvin's principle, of the right of private judgment, and the exercise of it had led him further than it had led Calvin. They were both condemned by the church, but Calvin claimed an authority over the faith of his Protestant brother. Servetus rejected predestination, and did not believe Jesus Christ to be God Almighty, but only his messenger and prophet, to mankind. Calvin instigated the magistrates of Geneva to prosecute him for the horrid crime of *heresy*, and Servetus, too virtuous to recant, what his conscience embraced, was burned to death at Geneva, amidst the pious exultation of the true Protestants of that city. The agency of Calvin, in this business, has been proved, and he is fairly entitled to descend to posterity, as the **MURDERER OF SERVETUS**.—See Dr. Benson on this subject.

effected almost a total revolution in the religion and worship of that country.

John Knox, a disciple of Calvin, preached the reformation in Scotland. The gallant spirit of the Scottish nobility had borne, with impatience, the papal yoke, they therefore encouraged the intrepid Knox, and asserted their liberty, by favouring the new religion.—In a few years Scotland found itself a country of *reformed*.

The reformed religion had many friends in England; for numbers, ever since the days of Wickliff, had inclined to forsake the see of Rome; but as the church was so intimately connected with the state, little progress had been made in reformation.—Slow is that process which is required to inform and convince the human mind on any subject where prejudice hath made a strong impression, and tedious must be the accomplishment of any great event depending on this slow operation. An event, however, now happened which effected at once, what would, by the spread of knowledge merely, have taken half a century to accomplish, and established, by law, the reformed church in England.

Henry VIII. the reigning prince, had conceived an inclination for Ann Boleyn, a favourite lady, whom he wished to marry, and therefore sought to be divorced from his queen.—

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To obtain this end, he applied to the pope; but the pope dared not to divorce Henry, lest the emperor of Germany, the nephew of the queen of England, should revenge, on the holy father, the cause of his aunt.—Henry was proud, arbitrary and sensual, little adapted to be tame under ecclesiastical restraint. Although himself a zealous Papist, he preferred the gratification of his lust, to the requisitions of his faith, and sought in the logic of the schools, what he was refused by the high priest of the church.—The Protestant professors and Casuists, from conscience, or from policy, favoured his views, and Henry was divorced from a virtuous queen, of the legality of his marriage to whom, she having been espoused by his late brother, after the revolution of many years, he became of a sudden doubtful.

The tenets of Luther, were those which are at present professed by the church of England, except the doctrine of eternal election and predestination, which was borrowed from the school of Calvin.

The tenets of the Calvinists differed little from those of the Lutherans, except in the doctrines of predestination and the Lord's supper; concerning which, Luther, as does also the church of England, held the doctrine of consubstantiation, which Calvin and Zuingle rejected, considering the sacrament merely as a memorial

memorial of the death of Jesus.—The sublime doctrine of transubstantiation was alike rejected by the impious reformers of Saxony and Switzerland.

A set of reformers, still more bold and intrepid, or to use the language of that dark age, still more impious and blasphemous, was formed in Poland, who did not only deny the mystery of Transubstantiation, but considered even the mystery of the Trinity, as false and absurd. At the head of this sect, by which the Christian world has in after ages been grievously scandalized was the celebrated Faustus Socinus. A gentleman who left his native country, and a large estate, in pursuit of theological truth, and a pure worship, and to whom the candour of modern times, has allowed, great disinterestedness, much learning, and a heart deeply imbued with sentiments of holy piety.* These reformers, not being favoured by the legislature, found their progress slow in Poland, and laboured for many years, without effecting any alteration, in the established religion of that country. Followers they had in great numbers, and had the civil powers favoured them, they had now been a nation of Unitarians. The historian Mosheim takes notice of a peculiarity in the mode of reforming, adopted by Socinus and his followers, the Polish Baptists. Other reformers, he observes,

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* Toulmin's Life of Socinus, and William Penn's Works.

began with the vulgar, but these never failed to propose their doctrine, in the first place, to the learned and the wealthy, though they did not neglect the poor. An enquirer will ask, did these dangerous men appeal to the learned, because they wished to deceive, or is it a proof that they had confidence in the truth of their doctrine, and therefore appealed to those most able to examine it? If he should be answered, that learning and wealth are uniformly represented in the scriptures, as unfriendly to the reception of truth,—he may perhaps ask, if wealth and learning be ever represented as unfriendly to Christianity, in any other way, than as the possessors of them, are often the votaries of luxury, and interested in the defence of *existing error*, as the means of their aggrandizement? As it is no part of my plan to detail the history of the reformation, I proceed to relate, those persecutions, which were excited by this valuable but imperfect work.

Henry the VIII. of England, at the very moment in which he was throwing off the Roman yoke, shewed his attachment to popery by burning for heresy, Thomas Bilney and Bayfield a monk, in the year 1531, and Baynam a lawyer in 1532. *

In 1535, Henry burnt near thirty of the reformed Christians, and drew and quartered the monks,

* Rapin's History of England, vol. I. page 792.

monks, so that both parties complained of this reforming king. Cardinal Fisher, and Sir Thomas More, he also executed. He wielded a two edged sword, and slew alike those who opposed his reformatations from popery, and those who heartily embraced the reformed doctrines! He hated the pope, as a king who loved power, but he adhered to the doctrines of the Roman church, as a man. At the death of Sir Thomas More science wept, and humanity shuddered; but was relieved by recollecting Sir Thomas himself, was a persecutor and a friend of persecution.

Henry engaged in a dispute with a celebrated divine of the name of Lambert, who denied the real presence and transubstantiation, but was unable to convince him of his error. He at length applied a princely argument to this heretic, and silenced him for ever. Lambert was burnt. The two Protestants Cranmer and Cromwell, do not appear to have opposed this brutal measure in their theological king.

Henry now caused his parliament to pass "an act for abolishing diversity of opinions in certain articles concerning the Christian religion." The substance of it was, that punishment of death should be inflicted upon those who—1. denied transubstantiation; or,—2. who held communion in both kinds; or,—3. who held the lawfulness of the marriage of priests; or,

or,—4. that vows of chastity may be broken;
 or,—5. that private masses are unprofitable;
 or,—6. that auricular confession is not necessary to salvation. *

Bishops Latimer and Saxton, and above five hundred persons in London, were thrown into prison, accused of not believing these six articles, but the King did not then proceed to their execution.

About the year 1540, many were burnt to death, for the Lutheran doctrine, and some were burnt to death for denying the king's supremacy! Bishop Gardiner was supposed to influence the king to destroy all heretics; and at his instigation, three Protestants were burned at Windsor, about the year 1543. About three years after this, many were burnt to death in Scotland, amongst the most illustrious of whom George Wishart must be named. The regent would have saved him from death, but cardinal Beaton, contrary to his orders, had him burnt, and fastened his eyes with the brutal sight. Ann Askew has been rendered immortal, by being at this time put to death, for denying transubstantiation. The law of the six Articles was, however, repealed, in the following reign of Edward VI.

In 15⁴⁹ 54, Joan Bocher, or Joan of Kent, was burnt for heresy and blasphemy; she denied the

* Rapin's History, vol. I.

the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity. Cranmer conducted this prosecution, and by every argument attempted to induce the amiable youth king Edward, to sign her death warrant. He long resisted the pious importunity of the Protestant bishop; but at length yielded, and signed it with tears, declaring Cranmer should answer to God for the cruel action.

George Van Pare was also burnt in Smithfield, for declaring God the Father, to be the only true God. His piety and virtue were eminent and acknowledged. This is the beginning of the persecution of the reformed church of England! It must be confessed, she began to persecute, almost before her power was established. King Edward dying, left the throne vacant, and Mary a papist, and a weak woman, succeeded this amiable and ingenious youth. Her first work, was persecution, in which she regarded the advice of bishop Gardiner. Hooper was burnt in a slow fire, and Rogers shared the same fate—two men of exact virtue, whose only crime was heresy. Saunders and Taylor were then the victims of the bishops burning zeal for holy church. Taylor was put into a barrel of pitch, and fire set to it. Bonner now undertook to carry on the work of persecution, and although Gardiner and Bonner were the projectors of this horrid business, they declared they had no hand in it, and attempted
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to throw all the blame on the court. This is a stale trick in the priesthood, by which even idiots could not now be deceived.

Philip, the husband of Queen Mary, was determined the odium should not be thrown upon the court, and although himself a most savage persecutor, ordered his chaplain, who was a Spanish priest, to preach against persecution, and to retort the charge upon the brutal bishop. Eight illustrious persons, amongst whom was Ferrar, bishop of St. David's, were sought out and burnt, by the infamous Bonner, in a few days. Sixty seven persons were this year A. D. 1555, burnt for heresy, amongst whom were the famous Protestants Bradford, Ridley, Latimer, and Philpot.

Cranmer was now degraded from his high dignity and used with unmanly insult. The fear of death, made this bishop sign an abjuration of the Protestant faith. Afterwards, however, when it was determined to put him to death, he expressed the deepest sorrow for what he had been thus led to do, and died avowing his attachment to the reformed doctrine. The friend of humanity will lament that this illustrious person, deserving in other respects a better fate, should have too much merited this condemnation, by his cruel murder of Joan of Kent.

In the following year, A. D. 1556, eighty-five persons were burnt for heresy. Women suffered,

suffered, and one in the flames which burst her womb, being near her time of delivery, a child fell from her into the fire, which being snatched out by some of the observers, more humane than the rest, the magistrates ordered the babe to be again thrown into the flames and burnt. Even the unborn infant was burnt for heresy ! O my God—with what eyes didst thou observe this shocking scene, at which nature shudders ! Such is the effect of superstition, and such the conduct dictated by those, who call themselves ministers of Christ ! The soul rises indignant at a race of men, made for the torment of the whole species.

After all this cruelty, the Protestants increasing, the civil magistrates relaxed the persecution, but the priests continued their instigations and efforts to prolong the carnage. The queen now erected a commission-court, which was followed by the destruction of near eighty Protestants ! Some affirm about three hundred, some affirm eight hundred, were put to death for heresy in this bloody reign.

On the death of Queen Mary, Elizabeth succeeded to the throne. Elizabeth being a Protestant, and being likewise taught by suffering under the reign of her sister, the Protestants blessed themselves that now their cause was established, and every friend of mankind hoped persecution would now cease. A church, call-

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ing itself Protestant, was indeed established, but this queen imitated her father, in persecuting both Protestants and Papists. Elizabeth was a princess of most arbitrary principles and character; ambition was her ruling passion, and he who contradicted her,—died. The Protestant bishops were continually employed in preaching in favour of arbitrary power, and persecuting all who dissented either from their political or theological creed. If any one wrote any thing against arbitrary power, either in church or state, he was immediately condemned and put to death, as an author of seditious publications, against which convenient laws were enacted, to please the queen and the priests. If any one refused to conform to the least ceremony in worship, he was cast into prison, where, for this offence, many of the most excellent men in the land perished. §

Two Protestants, of the Anabaptist faith, this accomplished queen burnt for heresy, and many more of the same denomination, she banished for the same crime. She also put two heretics to death, who had adopted the faith of Brown, the father of the Independents, and a little before this she butchered some Papists for their ancient heresy. The Archbishops Parker and Whitgift are “damned to eternal fame” for the brutal part they took in this
cruel

§ Neal's Hist. Puritans.

cruel carnage. Indeed the whole reign of Elizabeth, though distinguished by the political prosperity of England, as far as great fame and good fortune abroad, can be called prosperity, is nothing but a series of arbitrary and flagitious conduct, pointing to the destruction of all liberty, civil and religious, and full of murder for religious opinions. Elizabeth herself had no religion, but was openly profane, and addicted to common cursing and swearing, without the weakness of Mary, she had Mary's heart, thirsting for human blood.†

In the reign of Elizabeth the cause of persecution was ably supported abroad, the most notable instance of which happened in France, August 24th, 1572, which I shall relate in the words of the celebrated duke of Sully, who was himself a witness of the bloody scene. Relating the particulars of this business, he thus begins; “ If I were inclined to increase the general horror, inspired by an action so barbarous as that “ perpetrated on the 24th of August, I should “ in this place enlarge on the number, the “ quality, the virtues, and great talents of those “ murdered in this horrible day, as well in “ Paris, as in every other part of the kingdom. “ I have writings still in my hands, which would “ confirm the report of the court of France,

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“ having

† See Neal's Puritans, and Whitaker's Mary Queen of Scots.

“ having made the most pressing instances to
“ the neighbouring courts, to follow its ex-
“ ample with regard to the Protestants, or at
“ least to refuse an asylum to those unfortunate
“ people.—But I would, were it in my power,
“ for ever obliterate the memory of a day, that
“ divine vengeance made France groan for, by
“ a continual succession of misfortunes, blood
“ and horror, during six and twenty years.—It
“ is with regret, that I cannot omit what hap-
“ pened on this occasion to the prince who is
“ the subject of these memoirs, and to myself.

“ I was in bed and awakened from sleep,
“ three hours after midnight, by the sound of
“ all the bells, and the confused cries of the
“ populace. My governor St. Julian, with my
“ valet-de-chambre, went hastily out to know
“ the cause, and I never afterwards heard more
“ of them; they were, without doubt, amongst
“ the first that were sacrificed to the public
“ fury. I continued alone in my chamber
“ dressing myself, when, in a few minutes, I saw
“ my landlord enter, pale and confused. He
“ was of the reformed religion, and had con-
“ sented to go to mass, to save his house from
“ being pillaged, and his life from destruction.
“ He came to persuade me to do the same, and
“ to take me with him. I did not follow him,
“ but resolved to try if I could gain the college
“ of Burgundy where I had studied; though the
“ great

“ great distance I then was from the college
“ made the attempt very dangerous! Having
“ disguised myself in a scholar’s gown, I put a
“ large prayer book under my arm, and went
“ into the street. I was seized with horror in-
“ expressible, at the sight of the furious murder-
“ ers, who running from all parts, forced open the
“ houses and cried—*kill—kill—massacre the Hu-*
“ *guenots!!* The blood I saw shed before my eyes
“ redoubled my terror. I fell into the midst of
“ a body of guards, they stopped me, interroga-
“ ted me, and were beginning to use me ill,
“ when happily for me, the book that I carried
“ was perceived and served me for a passport.
“ Twice after this, I fell into the same danger,
“ from which I extricated myself with the same
“ good fortune.—At last, I arrived at the
“ college of Burgundy, where a danger still
“ greater than any I had yet met with, awaited
“ me, The porter having twice refused me en-
“ terance, I continued standing in the midst of
“ the street, at the mercy of the furious murder-
“ ers, whose numbers increased every moment,
“ and who were evidently seeking for their prey.
“ I prevailed on the porter to let me in, for a
“ few pieces of money, where two inhuman
“ priests, wanted to force me from him, to cut
“ me to pieces, saying the order was *not to spare*
“ *even infants at the breasts!*—The king of
“ Navarre was obliged to go to mass; if he had
“ refused

“ refused, he would have been murdered. I
 “ was advised to do the same. The king and
 “ the prince of Condè, were awaked two hours
 “ before day, by armed soldiers, who rushing
 “ into their room, carried them to king Charles,
 “ who immediately commanded them to go to
 “ mass, or suffer as criminals and rebels.

“ It was not long before Charles felt the most
 “ violent remorse, for the barbarity to which
 “ he had given the sanction of his name.—
 “ From the evening of the 24th of August, he
 “ was observed to groan involuntarily, at the
 “ recital of a thousand cruelties, practised on
 “ that occasion. The number of Protestants
 “ murdered, during eight days, over all the
 “ kingdom, amounted to *seventy thousand*! Soon
 “ after this Charles IX died in the most dread-
 “ ful torments.”†——Such was the massacre of
 St. Bartholomew, reader pause—and weep over
 human nature !!!§

Pope Pius V. was said to be so much affected
 at this bloody deed, that he wept; but Gregory
 XIII. who succeeded him, ordered a public
 thanksgiving

† Sully's Memoirs.

§ This massacre shews the high importance of instructing the
common people into the principles of religious liberty. No
 great event can be produced without *their* concurrence and as-
 sistance; and the only way to prevent their ignorance, from
 being abused by the craft of the higher orders, is to remove
 that ignorance, by general instruction.

thanksgiving to God, for this massacre, to be offered at Rome, and sent a legate to congratulate Charles IX. and to exhort him to continue it! If such men as Gregory are the vicars of Christ, then indeed is Jesus the minister of sin!—The duke of Guise was the chief actor in this horrid scene, and the young king, Charles IX. was so brutal, as himself to fire on the fugitives, from a window in the palace, and to encourage the carnage, by repeatedly crying out—*kill—kill*. The young king's heart was not naturally so base, he soon felt compunction; but his mother, whose heart was made for such designs of blood and murder, induced her son to aid the cruelty she had designed, by his royal sanction. This cursed woman did not, like her son, feel repentant for thus promoting the honour of the church!

James I. succeeded Elizabeth on the throne of England, and united the two kingdoms of England and Scotland. Educated a Presbyterian, the friends of reformation expected at once, a cessation of persecution, and the protection and countenance of the young king. In both they were grievously disappointed.—The Protestant churches of England and Scotland had laid down *persecution* as the *mark* and *evidence* of a *false* church; but if their mark were a just one, neither of them merited the honourable appellation of a true church. When James ascended the

the throne, his first concern appears to have been the maintenance of his prerogative, and the extension of his power. He eagerly looked around him, for those who were best inclined to secure him these advantages. Experience had taught him, that the rough manners of the Presbyterian clergy, shewed them to be ill adapted to his purpose. They had too often been to him, the instruments of restraint, and had shewn too little disposition to flatter his vanity, or assert the omnipotence of his power. In the English clergy, and especially the bishops, he found men every way fitted for his purpose. *Every tyrant is in his turn a sycophant, and every sycophant is in his turn a tyrant*, is a maxim founded on experience, and James perceived that those whose pleasure was the burning of others, would conform to any thing to please him, from whom they derived their power. His standing maxim soon was "No Bishop, *no King*;" for he found no other men, whose endeavours were equally to be depended upon, in securing unlimited obedience in the people, and asserting *unlimited authority in the prince*. To bribe their exertions in favour of despotism, he published edicts full of the old spirit of persecution. Bancroft, the pious bishop, was at once his adviser and agent. The king published a proclamation commanding all Protestants, to conform *strictly and without any exception* to
all

all and singular the rites and ceremonies of the church of England, and granted indulgence to tender consciences, to none but Roman Catholics, of all his numerous subjects in England.

The spirit of this proclamation was directed by Bancroft, to the heads of thousands of Protestant nonconformists. Above five hundred clergy were immediately silenced or deprived, for not complying with some slight ceremonies. Some were excommunicated and some banished the country. Every mean was used to distress Dissenters. They were deprived, censured, fined in the Star Chamber, and used in the most violent and arbitrary manner. Worn out, with endless vexations, and unceasing persecutions; many retired to Holland, and from thence to America, seeking amongst untutored savages, and roaring wild beasts, that mercy they were denied by Protestant bishops and priests in their native land. Amongst the most illustrious of these fugitives was Mr. Robinson, the father of the Independents in America.—James, dreading the consequence of such numerous emigrations, prohibited them, but without effect. It is witnessed, by a most judicious historian, that in this, and some following reigns, twenty-two thousand persons were banished from England, by persecution, to America.†

O

To

† See Ramfay's History of the American Revolution.

To stifle the spirit of enquiry, hostile at all times to arbitrary power, in church and state, and to promote universal thoughtlessness and ignorance, James published the book of sports, to be read in churches, which on their refusing to comply with the requisition to read it, was the means of depriving and silencing, all the clergy of honour and conscience in the nation.

When Charles I. ascended the throne, he early discovered very arbitrary principles of government, and agreeable to the schemes of such as have ever attempted to enslave mankind, he flattered the priesthood, in their most daring usurpations. It is an observation of the authors of the Independent Whig, that where there are no Dissenters from the established worship, there exists not a freeman in the nation. This is an observation founded on the experience of ages, that the power of the clergy, is the death-warrant of liberty. Charles soon discovered his whole heart, by marrying a Roman Catholic, and placing the infamous Laud at the head of both state and church. Laud was another Thomas á Becket, and had powers equally formidable, being Archbishop of Canterbury, and the first man in the state. He indeed lived in times not quite so benighted, yet ignorance, bigotry, and superstition were even yet almost universal. A proof of this may be found in the conduct of the better sort of priests in Ireland, in this reign.

reign. A number of pious bishops, with the famous Archbishop Usher at their head, published a protest against the toleration of Roman Catholics, not on account of their political principles, being supposed dangerous, but because they did not *dare* to concur in the toleration of Catholics, lest *they* (the Protestant bishops!) should be involved in the *sin of idolatry*. Here are men prepared to exterminate the human race, because they do not adopt *their* creed, and piously acknowledge *their infallibility!*—Laud pushed the great business of persecution, to its utmost bounds, and gave the nation more exercise in this way, than it was inclined to suffer. Numbers, torn to pieces by this Protestant bishop, in their families and property, fled to America, and founded the settlement of Massachusetts Bay. They were the fathers of the first assertors of liberty in the last war.

A. D. 1630, the learned Dr. Leighton wrote a book against the hierarchy, and felt, to his cost, that his good mother was inclined to chastise, as much as to cherish her offspring, when they called in question her high authority.—He was sentenced in the High Commission, in a fine of ten thousand pounds, perpetual imprisonment, and whipping. 1. He was whipped, and then placed in the pillory. 2. One of his ears cut off. 3. One side of his

nose slit. 4. Branded on the cheek with a red-hot iron, with the letters S. S. whipped a second time, and placed in the pillory; about a fortnight afterwards, his sores being yet uncured, he had the other ear cut off, the other side of his nose slit, and the other cheek branded. He continued in prison, till the Long Parliament set him at liberty. Archbishop Laud, had the honour of conducting this prosecution. *

About four years afterwards, William Prynne, a barrister, for a book which he wrote against the *sports* on the Lord's Day, was deprived from practising at Lincoln's Inn, degraded from his degree at Oxford, set in the pillory, had his ears cut off, imprisoned for life, and fined five thousand pounds.—Such was the mild spirit of Protestantism!

The horrid massacre of the Protestants of Ireland, happened in October, A. D. 1641, not without the knowledge and privity of the English court, as historians suppose.—Mr. Neal describes this brutal business in the following terms:—"On the day appointed, between
 "twenty and thirty thousand of the native
 "Irish appeared in arms in the northern counties, and having secured the principal gentlemen, and seized their effects, they murdered
 "the common people in cold blood, forcing
 "many

* See Neal's History of Puritans.

“ many thousands to fly from their houses and
 “ settlements naked, into the bogs and woods,
 “ where they perished with hunger and cold.—
 “ No ties of friendship, neighbourhood, or con-
 “ sanguinity were capable of softening their
 “ obdurate hearts, in a cause which they called
 “ the cause of loyalty and religion.—
 “ Some they whipped to death, others they
 “ stript naked and exposed to shame, and then
 “ drove them, like herds of swine, to perish in
 “ the mountains—Many hundreds were drown-
 “ ed in rivers, some had their throats cut, others
 “ were dismembered. With some the execrable
 “ villains made themselves sport, trying who
 “ could hack the deepest into an Englishman’s
 “ flesh ; husbands were cut to pieces in presence
 “ of their wives ; wives and young virgins
 “ abused in presence of their nearest relations,
 “ nay they taught their children to strip and
 “ kill the children of the English, and dash
 “ out their brains against the stones. Forty or
 “ fifty thousand were massacred in a few days,
 “ without distinction of age, sex, or quality,
 “ before they suspected their danger, or had
 “ time to provide for their defence.”†

The insurgents published a proclamation and
 took an oath, that they took up arms in defence
 of religion and the king’s prerogative,—or in
 other words, agreeably to the more modern
 expression—*Church and King*.

Bishop

† History of Puritans.

Bishop Burnet observes, " That a massacre
" was not the first intention, but to execute
" their purpose was adopted afterwards, and as
" *the country was governed by priests,*" says he,
" *these men set on the Irish,* to all the blood and
" cruelty that followed." This massacre was
the real foundation of the subsequent civil wars,
in the opinion of Lord Clarendon, the Tory
historian. " It was Ireland," says his lordship,
" that drew the first blood, if they had not, at
" that time, rebelled, and in that manner, it is
" very probable that the miseries which after-
" wards befel the king and his dominions had
" been prevented."—Persecutors, hear the tes-
timony of a friend of persecution, and tremble
at the consequence of your proceedings !

In 1643, the long parliament interdicted the
freedom of the press, and appointed licensers of
the press—a singular introduction this to the
establishment of the liberty they promised.

In 1645, an ordinance was published, sub-
jecting all who preached or wrote against the
Presbyterian directory, for public worship, to
a fine not exceeding fifty pounds ; and impri-
sonment for a year for the third offence, in
using the episcopal book of Common Prayer,
even in a private family.*—Such was the spirit
of Presbyterian toleration !

The following year, when the king had sur-
rendered to the Scots, the Presbyterians applied

to

* Blackstone's Commentaries,

to parliament, pressing them to enforce *uniformity in religion*, and to extirpate popery, prelacy, heresy, schism, agreeably to the solemn league and covenant, and to establish Presbyterianism, by abolishing all separate congregations, and preventing, any but Presbyterians, from all offices under government. A resolution of greater folly, madness, and persecution was never formed by any fanatics which have disgraced the world. The parliament did not approve of this madness, and the Independents (a sect which first asserted general toleration) opposed it with becoming spirit.

Those infallible teachers, the London Presbyterian ministers, and the ministers in Gloucestershire, published their protest and testimony against all errors, and especially that greatest of all errors, *toleration*. They seem to be at a loss for words to express their deep abhorrence of the damnable heresy called toleration, or an indulgence to tender consciences. They call it "the error of toleration, patronizing and promoting all other errors, heresies and blasphemies whatsoever, under the grossly abused notion of liberty of conscience."* These wise gentlemen needed no liberty of conscience, they were right, all others were blasphemous heretics, to be damned for their pleasure hereafter, and who ought to have been burnt for their satisfaction and delight here.

On

* Neal's Hist. Puritans,

On the 2d of May, 1648, the English parliament, being ruled by the Presbyterians, published an ordinance against heresy as follows, viz. "That all persons who shall maintain, publish, or defend, by preaching or writing, the following heresies with obstinacy, shall, upon complaint or proof by the oath of two witnesses, before two justices of the peace, or confession of the party, be committed to prison, without bail or mainprize, till the next goal delivery; and in case the indictment shall be found, and the party on his trial shall not abjure his said errors, and his defence and maintenance of the same, *he shall suffer the pains of death*, as in case of felony, without benefit of clergy; and if he recant or abjure, he shall remain in prison till he find securities, that he will not maintain the said heresies or errors any more; but if he relapse, and be convicted a second time, *he shall suffer death.*"

The errors, or heresies were the following:—

1. Denying the being of a God,—
2. Denying his omnipresence, omniscience, purity, eternity, &c.—
3. Denying the Trinity in any way,—
4. Denying that Christ had two natures, and was man,—
5. Denying the resurrection,—
6. Denying the atonement, the scriptures, &c.—

Heresies of less magnitude are censured, and subject their assertors to persecution. This is another

another specimen of Presbyterian infallibility and candour ! ‡

The duke of Savoy, A. D. 1655, banished the Protestants from Piedmont with the greatest cruelty. In their distress they applied to Cromwell (now Protector of England) for relief, he immediately procured their restoration to their just rights,—the duke trembling at the thunder of his name. The English nation, with great generosity, subscribed for the relief of these worthy Protestants, near forty thousand pounds. The celebrated act of uniformity was passed in the year 1661, by which, all who did not conform to the liturgy by St. Bartholomew's day following, August 1662, were to be deprived of their benefices. In consequence of this, two thousand clergymen were deprived.—Many were obliged to give up their livings, because they would not swear to what they had not seen. About this time, the respectable people called Quakers, petitioned parliament for a toleration, instead of which, an act was passed, which after describing that body, enacted, “ If any such
 “ person refuse to take an oath when tendered
 “ to him, after the 24th of March or persuade
 “ others to do it, or maintain the unlawfulness
 “ of taking an oath, or if they shall assemble for
 P “ worship

‡ Observing the Presbyterian tyranny and persecution, the sublime Milton observes, “ New Presbyter, is but old Priest
 “ wrote large.”

“ worship to the number of five or more, of the
 “ age of fifteen, they shall forfeit for the first of-
 “ fence, five pounds, for the second, ten pounds,
 “ and for the third, shall abjure the realm, or
 “ be transported to the plantations.”*—Three
 thousand and sixty eight, says Fox, had been
 imprisoned since the restoration of Charles II.
 Other statements make the imprisoned still
 more numerous, many died in goal, and their
 places of worship were broken open and vio-
 lence offered to them.

In 1668, the famous quaker William Penn,
 wrote a confutation of the doctrine of the Atha-
 nasian Trinity, and the atonement of Christ,
 and had the honour of being for this work, im-
 prisoned seven months in the tower. Penn, al-
 though he did not embrace all the opinions of
 Socinus, speaks in high terms of the character
 of that celebrated man. § In 1670, Penn was
 tried at the Old Bailey, along with Mr. Mead,
 for preaching to an assembly of Quakers, in
 Grace-Church-street, London, after the passing
 of the conventicle act. They were indicted for
 preaching to an unlawful and tumultuous assem-
 bly.

* The excellent Dr. Wendeborn laments the decrease of
 the Quakers in England, and considers it as the decrease of
 decency, order, and the most valuable virtues. In this I cor-
 dially join with this truly Catholic and Christian divine, whose
 book for candour cannot be excelled, and ought to be read
 by every Englishman.—See View of England, &c.

§ Penn's Works, vol. I.

bly, The jury brought in their verdict *guilty of speaking in Grace-Church-street*; but Mead they acquitted of even this guilt.—The jury were treated with the most wanton and tyrannical insult, and were urged to condemn the prisoners. They manfully refused to be threatened into injustice, and after much fasting and infinite abuse, brought in a final verdict—*not guilty*.†

In the reign of Charles II. the following penal persecuting statutes were passed.—1. Act of uniformity,—2. Corporation act,—3. Conventical act,—4. Oxford act,—5. Test act.—These acts compose a complete system of persecution, so that had they been all universally enforced, no person but those of the church, could have escaped ruin, banishment, or death. Charles was a prophane libertine, of the most corrupt morals, and treated all religion with contempt, yet because of his persecuting measures, he was praised by the high church clergy and bishops in every pulpit!§

P 2

When

† Penn's Works.

§ The persecutions of this and former Protestant reigns, drew from the earl Castlemain, a Roman Catholic nobleman, the following observations. “It was never known that Rome
“persecuted as the bishops do, those who adhere to the same
“faith with themselves; and however the prelates complain
“of the bloody persecution of queen Mary, it is manifest that
“their

When Lewis XIV. of France, meditated the revocation of the edict of Nantz, he was advised by one of his ministers not to do it, as it would be attended with the worst consequences to his kingdom. He was remarkably ignorant of religious opinions, and his reply shews the blindness and the strength of his superstition. "Such is my zeal to convert heretics, that if it requires me by one hand to cut off the other, I will do it." The revocation of this edict produced the greatest confusion and ruin.

All the Protestant clergy were first banished; and their people who discovered a wish to follow them, were condemned to the gallies, the women were forced into the nunneries. All who remained in the kingdom, of the Protestant faith, were prohibited the exercise of their religious worship, either public or private, on pain of death. The children of Protestants were *taken from their parents*, and given to their Catholic relations, or to others, whom the judges chose, to charge with their education. A twentieth part, of the whole body of the Protestants,

"their persecution exceeds it, for under her there were not
"more than two or three hundred put to death; whereas
"under their persecution, above treble that number have
"been rifled, destroyed, and ruined in their estates, lives, and
"liberties; being (as is remarkable) men for the most part
"of the same spirit, with those Protestants who suffered under
"the prelates in queen Mary's time.

Protestants, were soon put to death, and a price set on the heads of the rest, who were hunted like wild beasts of the forest. Thus France, (notwithstanding the prohibition to leave the kingdom) presently lost *six hundred thousand* valuable citizens, who supplied William III. with courageous soldiers, and England, Holland and Germany with useful manufacturers.*

Voltaire says, fifty thousand families, in the first three years, were banished, who carried with them a prodigious quantity of money, and their arts and manufactures enriched the enemies of their cruel country § This persecution, says the same author, rather increased than diminished the sect it was intended to destroy, and France derived not from it even an ideal advantage. The priests celebrated the praise of Lewis, who expected from them the kingdom of heaven, for such an example of holy zeal. These instances seem to warrant the severe reflection of a fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, who says,—"The history of the church, which
 " teaches us that the power of the priesthood
 " has, in every age, and in every part of the
 " world, been the cause of error, confusion and
 " bloodshed; and as human nature is the same
 " in all ages, we may rest assured, that as long
 " as

* Ruffel's History of Modern Europe. § L' Historie Générale, vol. VIII.

“ as a priesthood remains, so long will our liberties, spiritual and temporal, be in danger.”

When William III. came to the throne of England, he shewed himself the warm friend of the rights of conscience, and in his reign was passed the toleration act, under the influence and protection of which, sectaries of every kind have for one hundred years, slept secure under their own fig tree. The toleration act, however, did not include in its favour, those who denied the doctrine of the Trinity, and about fifty years after the reign of William III. a prosecution was commenced against Mr. Ellwall, who had written on that subject. He was tried at the assizes at Stafford, before judge Denton, for heresy and blasphemy, and was acquitted, though he pleaded *guilty* to the indictment.— The judge conformed to the spirit of the times, rather than to the spirit of the laws, and gave honourable liberty to a man whose only crime was heresy. This is the last legal prosecution for heresy, in England; but laws still against heretics remain unrepealed, though many attempts have lately been made to procure their repeal. The bishops strenuously opposed their repeal, on the motion of Earl Stanhope, and it may fairly be supposed they will continue so to do, till the voice of the nation become irresistible. Though no *legal* prosecution for heresy hath been entered upon since that of Ellwall, the

the spirit of persecution is not yet evaporated, but hath repeatedly discovered itself since, especially in the infamous and disgraceful riots of London, in the year 1780, and those of Birmingham, in the year 1791.*

The reader will here remark, that the charge of persecution is here brought home, *equally* to the Papist, the Protestant Episcopalian, and the Presbyterian.—He will draw this wise and fair conclusion, that whatever dogmatical sect, is established by law, that sect will attempt the extirpation of all other sects. He will smile when he observes the Protestant persecuted by the Papist, and then alledging that to persecute is the property of a false, but *to be persecuted* is the character of a true church, and then sees the Protestant persecute the Papist, and the Papist rejoicing in suffering for the truth. He will smile when he hears the Episcopalian defend the persecution of the Presbyterian, and the Presbyterian defend the persecution of the Episcopalian, he will not think persecution the test of a true church, either in those who suffer, or in those who inflict it, but he will consider it as a good proof of one fact,—
*“ That he who suffers is not established, but he
 “ who*

* These riots afford another proof of the necessity of instructing the *common people*, into the principles of religious liberty.

"who inflicts persecution, is of the established church, whatever, or wherever that church be."

The philosopher will teach condour to the dogmatist, by reminding him that the world contains many and very different sects and religions, all professed by those who are the creatures and offspring of God. He will bid him join in no precipitate curses, but leave God finally to settle the difference, (for he only is able) whilst he hears the Jew condemn the Turk, and the Turk the Jew, the Christian condemn both, and both condemn the Christian, all of them condemn the disciples of Confucius, and Confucius's disciples condemn them all, the tribes of idolatrous Gentoos condemn all other religionists, and all others condemn them. In this dark confusion he will not form a hasty judgment, but looking up to the Father of all, will ascribe judgment alone to him, whose thoughts are not as man's thoughts, and who in all cases, and in every instance, "judges a righteous judgment."

Perhaps an enquiring reader will ask,—if so various, so cruel, and so fatal have been the persecutions of Christians, if Christianity have given occasion to so much suffering, if so many *human sacrifices* have been offered up by Christians to their God, is it upon the whole any advantage to the world, that Christianity has been preached amongst mankind?—This is a question

tion of great importance, it will be in vain to reply, that these evils have arisen from the *abuse* of Christianity, we must meet it in its full extent, and argue the effect of Christianity, as it must have been foreseen to him, who gave it for a blessing to mankind. This question can only be determined by comparing the good, with the evil, which men have received, and which has attended the spread of Christianity. The evil consists of the persecutions which we have already given in detail; but the good is so great and various, that it is difficult to fully state it. Men must have some powerful motive to induce them to attend to their duty; and the great *body of mankind* are incapable of being attached to their duty either by *present interest* or by *fame*. It is little their *labour* can produce, and they are too *obscure* to excite public attention. Where interest and fame are alike impotent, religion is all powerful. The gain and the loss which this life presents to them, are easy of estimation, and insufficient to inspire them with energy in action, or to prevent them from becoming *positively bad*; but the hopes and fears inspired by Christianity, are as great in their effects, as their object is indefinite, we owe it to Christianity, therefore, that the common people attend to the ordinary calls of duty; and Christianity is capable of making them likewise perform extraordinary acts.

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He who has read Ramsay's history of the American revolution, has seen, that the most terrible dangers may be met with fortitude, the most painful labour sustained with cheerfulness, the greatest exertion put forth, without the hope of emolument, or the inspiration of ambition or fame, by the lowest of a people who are alive to the influence of religion. The hopes inspired by Christianity, have nerved the arm of patriotism, and spread the triumphs of benevolence and of liberty. Religion is the sanction of every oath, the ultimate appeal in cases involving property, liberty, and life. Generosity and charity, look here for their reward, and hence collect their force. Christianity finally is the great antidote of fear and of death. Civil government, though intended for safety and peace, gives occasion sometimes to war.—Religion, the sure foundation of all that is just, generous, and mild, has also given occasion to war.—Persecutions are the wars of religion.—Civil government, notwithstanding the *wars* it has occasioned, is still a good, and religion notwithstanding its wars, is a blessing. If it be said other religions as well as Christianity will produce such effects as these; I answer, other religions have also their *persecutions*,* and if such

* The religion of the Romans is in point, the persecution of early Christians we have given in detail, which its influence occasioned.

such effects cannot be produced without *religion*, our argument is good. But although we admit the value of other religions, we deny that they are equal in effect to Christianity. Christianity is believed by all orders, and therefore has a more extended influence, whereas other religions are generally believed *only by the lowest of the vulgar*. A more important distinction is, Christianity enforces *general virtue and pure morals*, most other religions enjoin only *ceremonies*, and lay no restraint on the passions, nay, often prompt their more licentious indulgence.—Virtue, public, and private; therefore, must seek it's security, not in the impure rites of Heathenism, but the awful sanctions of Christianity.



1 AP 57

A N
A C C O U N T
O F T H E
P R E S E N T S T A T E O F R E L I G I O N,
I N T H E
U N I T E D S T A T E S O F A M E R I C A,

AFTER the revolution of thousands of years, in which mankind have been abused by every species of tyranny, almost in every part of the world, the friend of human nature is at last gratified, to observe a rising country, ⁱⁿ possession of the best civil government that ever was established, in which liberty and good order are so united, as to give mortal beings a chance of such a measure of felicity, as shall obviously make their creation a blessing, and thus glorify the great Father of the Universe.

It is to be numbered amongst the wisest measures of the American Legislators, that they left the mind of man as they found it, free and unfettered,

fettered, and suffered the Christian religion, to display its energy, and demonstrate its truth, by spreading and operating, without the aid of the civil magistrate. This is the first country that we know of, which has made this experiment, and the effect is likely to be, the reward of *perpetual liberty, and unbeard of felicity*.—The principles of religious liberty, established and supported in the United States, are well expressed, in an act of the assembly of Virginia, passed in the beginning of the year 1786, which is as follows:—

“ Well aware that Almighty God hath created
“ the mind free; that all attempts to influence
“ it by temporal punishments or burthens, or
“ by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget
“ habits of hypocrisy, and are a departure from
“ the plan of the holy author of our religion,
“ who being lord of body and mind, yet chose
“ not to propagate it by coercion on either;
“ that the impious presumption of legislators
“ and rulers, civil, as well as ecclesiastical, who
“ being themselves but fallible and uninspired
“ men, have assumed dominion over the faith
“ of others, setting up their own opinion and
“ mode of thinking, as alone true and infallible,
“ and as such endeavouring to impose them on
“ others) hath established and maintained false
“ religions, over the greatest part of the world,
“ and through all time; that to compel a man
“ to

" to furnish contributions of money, for the
 " propagation of opinions which he disbelieves,
 " is sinful and tyrannical. That even the *forcing*
 " a man to support this or that teacher of his
 " own religious persuasion, is depriving him of
 " the comfortable liberty of giving his contribu-
 " tions to the particular pastor, whose morals he
 " would make his pattern, and whose powers he
 " feels most persuasive to righteousness; and
 " withdrawing from the ministry those temporal
 " rewards, which proceeding from an approba-
 " tion of their personal conduct, are an addi-
 " tional incitement to earnest and unremitted
 " labours for the instruction of mankind. That
 " our civil rights have no dependence on our
 " religious opinions *more than on our opinions in*
 " *physic and geometry*; that therefore the proscri-
 " bing any citizen, as unworthy the public con-
 " fidence, by laying upon him an incapacity, of
 " being called to offices of trust and emolument,
 " unless he profess or renounce this or that re-
 " ligious opinion, is depriving him injuriously
 " of those privileges and advantages, to which
 " in common with his fellow citizens, he has a
 " natural right, and tends also to corrupt the
 " principles of that very religion it is meant to
 " encourage, by bribing with a monopoly of
 " worldly honours and emoluments, those who
 " will externally conform to it; that though
 " indeed those are criminal who do not with-
 " stand

“ stand such temptations, yet neither are those
 “ innocent who lay them in their way ; that to
 “ suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his pow-
 “ ers, into the field of opinion, and to restrain
 “ the profession or propagation of principles on
 “ supposition of their ill tendency, is a danger-
 “ ous fallacy, which at once destroys all religious
 “ liberty ; because, he being of course judge of
 “ that tendency, will make his opinions the
 “ rule of judgement, and approve or condemn
 “ the sentiments of others, only as they shall
 “ agree with, or differ from his own ; that it is
 “ time enough for the rightful purposes of civil
 “ government, for its officers to interpose, when
 “ principles break forth into overtacts against
 “ peace and good order. And finally, that truth
 “ is great and will prevail if left to herself, is
 “ the proper and sufficient antagonist of error,
 “ and can have nothing to fear from the conflict,
 “ unless by human interposition disarmed of her
 “ natural weapons, *free argument and debate*, er-
 “ rors ceasing to be dangerous, when it is per-
 “ mitted freely to contradict them.

“ Be it therefore enacted, by the general as-
 “ sembly, that no man shall be compelled, to
 “ support any religious worship, place, or mini-
 “ stry whatever ; nor shall be forced, restrained,
 “ molested, or burthened, in his body or goods,
 “ nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his
 “ religious opinions or belief ; but that all men
 “ be

be free to profess, and by argument to maintain their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall, in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities. And though we well know, that this assembly, elected by the people, for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding assemblies, constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act irrevocable, would be of no effect in law, yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted, are *natural rights of mankind*, and that if any act shall be hereafter passed, to repeal the present, or to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of *natural rights*.* Agreeably to this act, the principles of religious freedom have been established in every state, varying, indeed, in some measure, according to the circumstances of each, but preserving the spirit of this act in them all.

In New Hampshire, where there are very few Episcopalians, and where the Independents are most numerous, no parish is obliged to have a minister. If a parish choose a minister, they contract with one for his support; but full liberty is still left, for every one to change his religion, and be discharged from the contract with his minister. No predominant sect, is here supported by government, yet the ministers of re-

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* See Disney's Life of Dr. Jebb.

ligion are highly respectable, and find in the choice of their hearers, a liberal and abundant maintenance.

In Massachusetts, the legislature is empowered to require of the several parishes a provision for public worship; but they *choose their own ministers*, contract with them for their support, and every man worships as he himself thinks best. In this state the most numerous sects are the Independents and Baptists, which rapidly increase, a few Presbyterians and Episcopalians are also found here, no sect, in civil or religious privileges, is before or after another.—In the province of Main the same Catholicism prevails.

In Rhode Island, the Baptists are the most numerous sect. Religious liberty is here watched with a jealous sensibility. The worshippers contract with their clergy for their salaries, but so watchful are the laws, over clerical domination, that by an excess of scrupulosity the minister cannot sue his hearers at law, for a salary which he can prove being fixed by mutual contract. It should seem, that in this state, the clergy are likely to fare ill, but to prove the falacy of such reasoning, and to shew the *generous nature of real Christianity* the contrary is true. Their clergy are, notwithstanding all this seeming hardship, amply and abundantly supported, and held in great esteem. *

In

* See Morfe's Geography.

In Connecticut, where the most numerous sect is that of Independents, each church is a separate jurisdiction, chooses its own minister, and all religions are equal in the esteem of the state.

In the state of New York, the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, is secured for all men. The English Presbyterians and Dutch reformed churches, are the most numerous in this state. New York is a bishop's see, but the bishop of New York, has no independent salary, and is only the superintendent, of a few congregations, who chuse the form of episcopal jurisdiction. An harmless bishop this!

In New Jersey, the Presbyterians are the most numerous sect, and something of illiberality prevails, for though no man is compelled to support a minister he does not choose, yet the Roman Catholics are not eligible to civil offices, but every Protestant is eligible. This is the more remarkable, though the less grievous, because few, if any Catholics, are found in New Jersey.

In Pennsylvania there is no complusion in religion, each sect supports its own teachers, and every one who acknowledges a God and a Providence, is eligible to all offices of honour and profit. The Quakers are the most numerous body.

In

In the city of Philadelphia there are twenty-six congregations and eleven different sects;—a proof that leaving religion free, does not tend to destroy its influence; nor is this the experiment of a day, the same liberal policy has prevailed for two ages. In Delaware and Maryland the same freedom in religion is allowed.

Virginia was first settled by Episcopalians, who were bigotted persecutors, and jealous of their church, had surrounded it with immunities and endowments, and rendered their clergy luxurious and indolent. This soon opened the eyes of the people, and at the revolution, two-thirds were dissenters. Now all religions are equal, and equally protected, but the Episcopalians are but few.

In Kentucky and North Carolina all religions are equal, and all the peoples choice. In the former the Baptists, and in the latter the Scotch Presbyterians are the most numerous sects.

In South Carolina, a custom peculiar to that state prevails. The people elect their own clergy, but the law requires a declaration to be made by them resembling, but faintly resembling a confession of faith. “ They declare that they *will do their duty*, and inculcate nothing contrary to scripture, and that they will promote peace and love.” This however is needless, as their hearers are their judges, and would without this declaration, see that what they promise is performed.

formed. In Georgia, and the western territory, the fullest religious liberty is enjoyed, without preference of any sect or opinion.

In Vermont, all sects are equal which are Protestant, but the Catholics and Deists are not eligible to be chosen of the house of representatives.—If the system of religious liberty, which is established in the United States, be not in every respect *perfect*, it is perhaps as much so as any thing human can be. As long as they continue a civilized nation, this system must continue, for its advantages are daily more and more obvious. When we consider the excellent civil constitution of the United States, and what their religious rights are, we may justly hope, that if it be the will of heaven, that man should ever attain great excellence and great felicity, on earth, his will hath ordained that America should be the fair seat of human dignity.

It is a happy circumstance for Europe, that if persecution be ever revived, and rage in any kingdom; in the United States of America, an asylum is offered to those of every name, who may be subjected to its ravages.

OBSERVATIONS
ON
CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS
OF
RELIGION.

THE utility of civil establishments of religion, is a subject which has not yet met the discussion it merits ; but the conduct of the legislators of America has brought it of late, before the public mind. It can never be thought a matter of trifling importance, when it is recollected, that in all countries, Heathen, Jewish, and Christian, the priests have been the *masters of mankind*, and have often involved in their measures, the fate of empires. The advocates of religious establishments have not always been believers in religion. They have sometimes been its bitterest enemies. David Hume, contends earnestly for civil establishments of Christianity, for the express purpose of "*bribing the indolence of the clergy,*" and thus preventing religion

religion from exciting public attention. He thought it the only way to prevent the influence of that religion, which he despised, and in opposition to which, he spent a long and studious life. Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, and Thurlow, have been the friends of establishments of religion, and the enemies of those who dissented from them. Others have opposed establishments, believing them unfriendly to the influence of Christianity, for which they were amiable and able advocates, of this number were Milton, Robinson, and Price. All must admit that Christianity is silent about such establishments, and that they can only be defended on the supposition of their utility.—Here Mr. Paley joins issue with those Christians, who are the enemies of such establishments, and as I intend to take particular notice of his arguments on this subject, I shall content myself with his definition of an establishment.* “The
“notion of a religious establishment,” says he,
“comprehends three things, a clergy, or an
“order of men secluded from other professions
“to attend upon the offices of religion; a legal
“provision for the maintenance of the clergy,
“and the confining of that provision to the
“teachers of a particular sect of Christianity;
“he, therefore, who would defend ecclesiastical
“establishments must shew the separate utility.

“of

* Moral and Political Philosophy.

" of these three *essential parts* of their constitution "

1. Is it necessary to have an order of men set apart for religious instruction, and secluded from other employment? To prove this necessity, Mr. Paley, urges, " That Christianity is " an historical religion, written in a learned " language, and mixed with modes and customs " different from our own, and therefore requires " much study in him, who aspires to teach it."

It may be remarked, that the admission of the first case laid down, does not necessarily involve the admission of the second, nor does the admission of the second involve the admission of the third. They are three independent cases, forming independent propositions. To the first question then, I answer, by asking Mr. Paley,—Is it necessary to have an order of men set apart for the administration of physic? If this be necessary, that necessity will produce its effect, and create an order of physicians, without the state interposing its authority.—Dissenters from the established church have their order of men set apart for religious instruction, without looking to the state for that provision. Mr. Paley " admits that of the thousands employed by an establishment, *very few* can be supposed to add to the stock of sacred knowledge," but he says it is *sufficient* that *some* be found thus *qualified*, that *others may rely on their*
S *decision.*

decision. And are not *a few* always qualified amongst the dissenters to add to the stock of sacred learning? Amongst the established clergy find me names more distinguished for sacred learning, than those of the dissenters Poole, Leland, Lardner, Gale, Gill, Doddridge, and Watts. Are there not *as many* of the dissenters, in proportion to their numbers, eminent for sacred learning, as of the established clergy? The emoluments of an establishment will invite the indolent, profane, enemies of religion and of learning, into the church; † but where no establishment offers, it is most probable that a love of religion and learning will accompany men in the choice of the clerical profession. If then it be necessary to have an order of men, secluded from other employments to teach religion, that order is likely to be adorned with more learning and virtue, by arising from the wishes

† This is so strikingly the case, in countries where an establishment exists, that, I am convinced, as long as such establishments do exist, little or nothing of the moral effect of Christianity, can be expected to be produced. The church is considered, by the great, as a mart of sinecures for their younger children, and for this sole purpose, is supported by them. The crown finds a different use, but one not less important, of an established church. The late king of Prussia said, religion had seldom much engaged attention, or produced much faith, in kings and courts; he knew they supported ecclesiastical establishments, not because of the truth of religion, but of the subserviency of the clergy, to the views of the rulers of mankind.

wishes of the people, than by being appointed by the state. But it is not perhaps needful, even to admit this necessity. There is nothing absurd in uniting a civil profession, with the office of a teacher of Christianity. The office of a Christian teacher, is often united in Holland, with the profession of physic, and is sustained with the greatest honour to the teacher, and profit to the people. The learned languages are necessary to both professions, and in the present state of learning, the evidences of Christianity are rendered no burthensome study to a gentleman of another profession. Besides it is a favourable circumstance, that this mode would make religion to appear to be, what it certainly is, *the business of every man*. The most learned dignitaries of an establishment cannot inform his *bearers in general*, of the result of his more curious enquiries and learned researches, so that, *for the mass of the people*, a sensible man, with but little previous study, may be adequate to the purposes of instruction and edification. The clergy know something of languages, in general, but very few indeed apply this their knowledge to the study of religion, and what more qualified are those, who do not thus apply their learning, for the office of *Christian instruction*, than the more sensible amongst the Quakers, who reject the necessity of an order? Imposture exists without the aid of

this officiating order, and why should it be thought impossible for *truth* to do the same? ‡

The elders amongst the Mahometans lead the public worship, and they find not the pomp of vestments, and the independence of appointed orders, necessary to animate their devotions, and instruct their zeal. And in Mr. Paley's church there can be no need of study, as the articles and homilies authoritatively declare, the *only true sense of scripture*. Mr. Paley's argument for a distinct order of officiating clergy, supposes that something remains to be added to the present stock of sacred learning which the church possesses; yet he knows that if a clergyman use his learning in the investigation of the scriptures, and be led thereby to reject the doctrines which he has subscribed, and on the acknowledgment of which his emolument and his office depend, he reduces himself to a situation of extreme misery. He must either wound his conscience daily, or leave his place and its profits.—No, says the good archdeacon, that a gentleman subscribe the articles of the church, it is not necessary that he *believe* them.

Gentle

‡ Some think, that we owe to the priests, the polish and elegance of language, and classical knowledge.—Were the orators and critics of Greece and of Rome, the priests of those states? Have *we* not the parliament, and the bar, to call forth the powers of the orator and the critic? Where are the priests of modern days, who have contributed to the polish of our language, equally with Milton, Addison, Pope and Johnson?

Gentle reader, learn from Mr. Paley the obligation of truth, learn from the Christian divine the importance of sincerity to the human character. Jesus Christ says, indeed, the hope of the hypocrite shall perish, but remember he was not then speaking of the hope of ecclesiastical preferment!

The second question is, granting the necessity of an order of Christian teachers, is this order to be supported from the national treasure, or by an individual subscription? Mr. Paley says, from this national treasure, which he supports by the following reasons: "Few, if any, would subscribe. It should never be any man's *interest* to be of no religion. Preaching would be begging, and the clergy would loose their virtue by soliciting an augmentation of their subscription." The first reason is—"Few would subscribe:"—To this I reply,—all would subscribe who had *any religion*, and others who had none, would more readily give an occasional attendance, to the preaching of those who did not extort dues from them, than to those who did, which is the case at present.*—

Conscious

* The best argument I ever heard in behalf of an established religion, is founded on the supposition, that without such establishment, the remote country villages would not be at the pains to supply themselves with public instruction; yet I do not think this supposition well founded. It is contradicted by

Conscious that the subscriptions of dissenters make against this rule, Mr. Paley argues that if the *spirit of a party* do these things, it would not hold good when it no longer was a *party* cause. I presume the religious would still be a *party*, distinguished far more from unbelievers, than

by facts. In the early ages of Christianity, the country was well supplied with teachers, without any establishment, and admitting the *truth* of Christianity, it is still calculated to call forth an equal zeal, and produce equal effects; nay, if those effects do not now appear, perhaps the event may, with more truth be ascribed to establishments. — Certain it is, that if we observe effects take place in the absence of any thing, which cease when that is introduced, we are led to ascribe their cessation to the introduction of that thing, rather than to suppose its introduction favoured that with which it is observed never to exist in conjunction. It cannot be affirmed that the early zeal was produced solely by the *novelty* of Christianity, for it continued to operate, in the most powerful manner, without, and even in opposition to establishments, for five or six generations. A recent fact also is opposed to the supposition we are now endeavouring to invalidate. In those parts of America, where the clergy live by voluntary subscriptions, the instruction of the people is more general and effectual than in England. In a word, — the church establishment of England instructs not the poor, as recent riots manifest, and as every rational observer will testify. Men are naturally interested in that in which *themselves* are agents, but an establishment makes religion the business of priests and governors only. — If a quarter of the sum annually extorted in England by the church, were paid to country schools for instructing the poor, religion and the nation would profit by the arrangement.

than they now are from Christians, and surely no one can think, that men will conscientiously give for a ceremony, what they would refuse for the whole of religion. We have seen, Mr. Paley, contradicted by *fact*, in some of the American states. Great ^{as} is the authority of Mr. Paley, opposed to *fact*, his authority is nothing. But says the archdeacon, "It should never be any man's interest to be of no religion." The meaning of which is, that no religious man should be obliged to give or contribute any thing to support religion, more than the man who has no religion at all. To this I reply,—Those who look forward to the rewards of another state, will always believe that *something* is to be done, in order to obtain them. They will also believe that *something* must be *voluntary*, and if voluntary, that the man of no religion will not perform it. It will appear to the believer in a future state, that if that future state consist of punishment and reward, it supposes an inequality of character in the men who shall inherit them. He will therefore suppose it altogether reasonable, that *something*, some temporal *interest* must be sacrificed, to the hope of future interest, and he will think it the most natural expression of *piety* to contribute *something immediately* to the service of the church. This principle operated even on Heathens, and wrongly directed, operated in a powerful manner

ner in the Roman church. The establishment of Mr. Paley, makes all severely pay for religion, but the *force* by which the pay is extorted, renders it in no sense a *religious act*.

But,—“ The people choosing their clergy, would produce confusion, and few respectable men would embark in the Christian ministry.” The choice of representatives in Parliament, or of any other officer, might be affirmed to produce confusion, yet, Mr. Paley has not written a defence of the Turkish government. The confusion produced by the exercise of this privilege in the early church, was far overbalanced by the virtue it produced in the clerical character. Has Mr. Paley never heard of the character of the clergy, being injured by their dependence on patrons and prime ministers? I am sure he has. The clergy in Charles II's. reign, are examples in point, and in every reign, they are good for n.y argument. Respectable men embark amongst the dissenters as ministers, under the contempt and tyranny of an establishment; but remove this contempt and tyranny, and thousands more would press into the service of religion.—The establishment creates evils, and then exhibits them as an argument against leaving religion to the choice of mankind. The clerical office would not be less respectable than it is at present, even left free to the people's choice, it is the arrogance of an established

established clergy, which debauches the public mind, ^{makes it} be treated with disrespect.

It is certainly the clear doctrine of scripture, that men through much *self-denial*, and *great sacrifices*, must pass to the heavenly state.—This Christ taught, is his religion so totally changed, that the *smallest sacrifice of interest* or passion, should not now be made to the Christian's hope? If Mr. Paley preach a religion, which subjects a man to no *self-denial*, no *sacrifice of interest* or *inclination*, above what the infidel must make, if his religion level all distinctions and oblige to the exercise of no duty, it may suit some of its preachers, but it is not the religion of Jesus the Christ.——But, Mr. Paley, thinks preaching would be begging, if the preachers were supported by voluntary subscription. From a gentleman so respectable, I expected expressions less contemptuous, especially as they apply to the apostles, and all the first lights of the church. Mr. Paley's family are sick, he calls a physician, when he pays him for his attention, does he call this begging in the physician? The preacher is rewarded for *services done*, and for services done, claims a debt, like any other professor, or agent in any calling. But, says Mr. Paley, preachers would loose their character, by attempting to augment their income. Softly, what is the language of *fact*, did the early preachers, before Constantine,

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live

live less piously and virtuously, than the present preachers in Europe? Theory yields to experiment. If an order of physicians were established, it would soon be thought that without such establishment, the profession of physic would sink into contempt. All that were not of the establishment would be treated as quacks, and this is just the case with the dissenting clergy at present. Abolish the established order, and the profession and teaching of religion would be in equal esteem, with any other learned profession.

3. Admitting an established religion, should its emoluments be confined to one sect? Mr. Paley says, yes, except an harmony of opinion and worship so far prevail, as that an establishment could be built, upon a foundation sufficiently broad, to comprehend the whole. Where such a comprehension is not practicable, (and this can never be practical in any enlightened country) Mr. Paley would confine the emoluments of an establishment to one sect.

I find but three considerations of the least weight, brought forward in support of this opinion, under the supposition that the clergy be chosen by their hearers, and every other supposition, I reject, as beneath the notice of any one, who studies the point at issue. The first consideration is, that if the emoluments of religion be not limited to a particular sect, a Papist, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Moravian,

or

or an Anabaptist, would successively gain possession of the pulpit, according as a *majority* of the party happened at each election to prevail. And ought not an establishment to conform to the opinion of the *majority*? In a country where any one of these sects prevails, should not an establishment be made, if made at all in conformity to the opinion of this sect? And in case the opinion of a country change, and another sect become the majority, should not then the establishment change also? † This is, therefore, doing nothing more than what is done by an establishment, and those who dissent from the election, may set up another place of worship, without the degradation to which an establishment reduces dissenters. Will Mr. Paley say, that a clergyman should be appointed to preach to a congregation, the *majority* of whom are not of his religion? These things having once become common, no peculiar mortification would attend the defect of the minority, especially if they were at liberty to give their own money to their own chosen clergyman.—I must say this argument appears to me perfectly ridiculous, and unworthy of Mr.

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Paley,

† Mr. Paley himself asserts, that a prince who would establish a religion, should establish that of the majority of his subjects, in preference to his own; and he also affirms, that if the dissenters from an established church, become the majority, the *establishment should be changed to their opinions.*

Paley, it cannot apply to any body of men, where enquiry and reason are ever permitted.

Mr. Paley's second consideration is, that this mode is scarcely compatible with the division of a kingdom into parishes of commodious extent. I think it would make churches more numerous, and therefore better instruct the people.† The parishes in England are many of them so large, that old persons do not get to church once in seven years, and young children cannot travel so far. When Mr. Paley considers what sums are paid in England to bishops and cathedrals, he will agree, that making all the clergy officiate, and striking off all who do no work, a great deal more than the present number may be supported with the money now collected for the church; besides if village schools were erected for instructing the poor, and the teachers of them to do clerical duty on Sundays, a diffusion of knowledge would be observed, which the English church establishment never has, never will produce.

Mr. Paley's third consideration is, the incomes of the clergy varying with the number and wealth of their hearers, would create jealousies, and produce a proselyting spirit, which would deprave the clergy, and distract the country

† Without an establishment, the American states are divided into parishes, and we hear nothing of the incompatibility alledged by Mr. Paley.

country with contention. This argument is very similar to Mr. Hume's, that a dependent clergy would be too active. I reply to it,—That the inequality would then bear some proportion to talents, for when continual discussion is promoted, good sense will very soon prevail. And this is surely better than that enormous inequality which now prevails amongst the clergy, which exalts merit and degrades genius, which instead of promoting activity, zeal, and knowledge, promotes the most contemptible flattery of the vices of the great, in the clergy, and induces them with their drunken patrons, to curse religion and trample on the poor. The country so far from being distracted with contention, would hear and reply with calmness to different arguments; for it is only the establishment of a predominant sect, which causes envy, jealousy and every evil work.—Strange that Mr. Paley should be so negligent of facts, for it is well known, that where this is actually the case in America, a more philosophical moderation prevails, than in any part of Europe.—Having replied to all that I think important of Mr. Paley's arguments on the subject of establishments,* I will briefly mention some
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* There is one argument for establishments of religion, to which I am wholly unable to reply:—an argument in the contemplation of statesmen, said to be the only one of any consequence,

of the distinct and essential advantages of leaving religion, to be supported by its own evidence, amongst an enlightened people.

1. By making all sects equal, it would exclude both envy and persecution, envy of the privileges of an establishment from dissenters, and persecution from the church, by depriving her of the *power to persecute*. The preceeding history, shews the terrible effects of persecution, which *arose entirely from the policy of church establishments*. Had the religion of Jesus, which is a religion of charity and mercy unbounded, been suffered to spread and to exist, by its own nation evidence and energy, the blood of a martyr had never flowed. This would have saved the lives of perhaps more than a million of persons, sacrificed in various countries, and at different times, to the blood thirsty spirit of established priests. Nor are the lives of martyrs to be confounded with the common mass of mankind, who die in battle, in defence of despotism and tyranny.

The martyrs were men of the most exalted virtue, of the most *sincere character*, were men, who in their times had no superiors, no equals,

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quence, and yet fully conclusive on the point. It is this,—
“An established clergy are the best instruments in the hands of government, in reconciling the people to tyrannical measures; an establishment is a field of patronage productive of fruits favourable to the ambition of every minister, and every king.”

in all that gives dignity to mortal beings.— Their loss to society was great indeed, the salt of the earth was consumed, and society tended to putrefaction. Let the admirers of ecclesiastical establishments, shew an advantage in their scheme, equal to so horrid an abuse;—an abuse inseparable from establishments of religion, as nothing can restrain the fury of superstitious zealots, of perverse theological politicians, but depriving them of the *power* to rob and to murder. This history of every nation has shewn us,—it is not the extravagance of theory, but the sober assertion of fact.

2. It would soon produce a general philosophical moderation of mind. Small sects, equal in the esteem of government, find it their interest to respect each other, by sympathy they thus respect themselves. America shews this to be true, and Dr. Adam Smith, has shewn this to be the natural unvarying consequence of small independent sects.

3. It would aid the conversation of good morals; for small sects naturally watch their members closely, and every man thus religiously connected, finds he has a character to lose. But established churches produce no connection amongst their members, and consequently no *obscure person* feels his religious and moral character to be of any importance. This holds especially and universally good, in large towns,
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and when a man changes the place of his abode. The superior moral character of the dissenters, in every country, may be fairly appealed to, in proof of this fact.

4. It would shew religion to be, what it really is, something superior to the world, and different from its policy. Whoever embraced religion, would be supposed to do it from conviction, and this would excite enquiry and lead to the hearty reception of its precepts. The case at present is quite otherwise, both in England and on the Continent. A general distrust and neglect prevail, and none are supposed to profess religion from a higher principle than fashion or policy. If establishments long exist, infidelity will be general, it is gaining ground apace, and most rapidly in those countries, where establishments are most wealthy and pompous.

5. It would favour the general liberties of mankind; for priests have always been the instruments of tyranny in the hands of government, and have preached to the people passive obedience and non-resistance, promising to the man who was willing to be a *slave*, a *future state* of felicity, for a present state of wretchedness. Their craft has been supported by princes, and perhaps the history of the American revolution, is the only one which exhibits the clergy, as *friends to the people*, and to *liberty*. The reason

is obvious, the American church, depended more upon the people, than upon government, they had, therefore, a common interest, and a common cause to defend.

6. It would favour the diffusion of knowledge. The clergy, established in their greatest pomp, taught the people that *ignorance* is the *mother of devotion*. They prevented the Bible from being read, and endeavoured by every possible means to *confine* knowledge to *themselves*. This is a true corporation spirit, and what will always be favoured by those, who set up to be the masters of mankind. All knowledge has a natural connection, and thus religious knowledge leads to the cultivation of general science. Religious knowledge either is, or is not of itself, of real value and importance. If it be not, then no clergy can be of any use at all; if it be, then an unestablished clergy are of most value; for it is of the nature of small sects, to promote examination, and general enquiry, which issue in the acquisition of religious knowledge. The ignorance of the lowest orders of the people, of religious matters, is so notorious in this kingdom, where two millions a year are paid for their instruction, that none will contend, that the proposed end (if that end be instruction) of an establishment is answered in them. The preaching mechanics, called Methodists, have in the last fifty

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years,

years, instructed more of the lower orders of the people, in the obligations of Christianity, and have called more from gross vice to piety and virtue, than the church has ever done since the reformation. Yet the clergy, for their services, have been paid, in that period, by the state, four hundred millions sterling, whilst the Methodists have not cost government one farthing, but have been treated with insult and contempt, by both bishops and statesmen. The Methodists seem willing to put the whole on the issue of this enquiry,—is there a future state?

FINIS.

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